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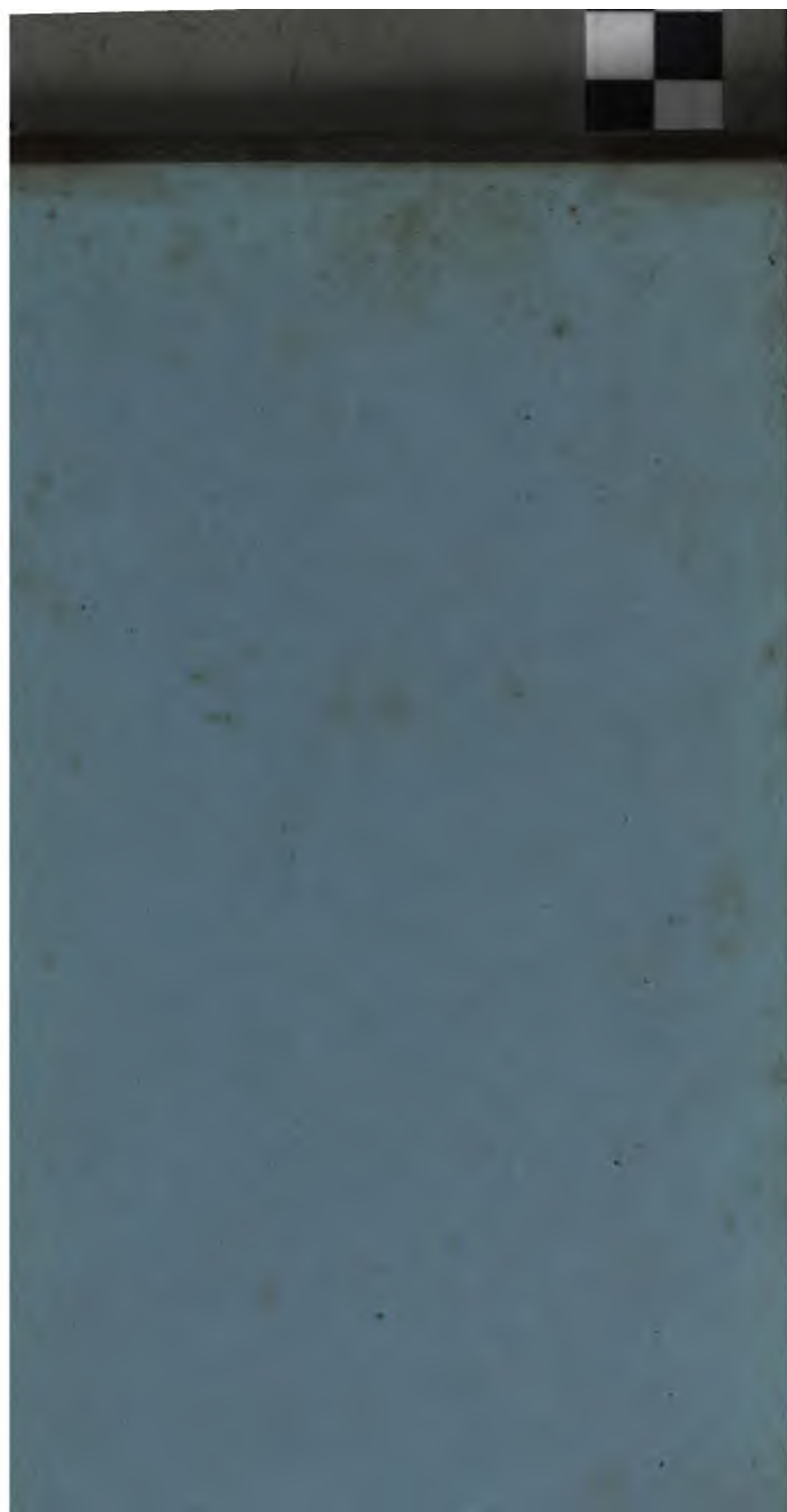
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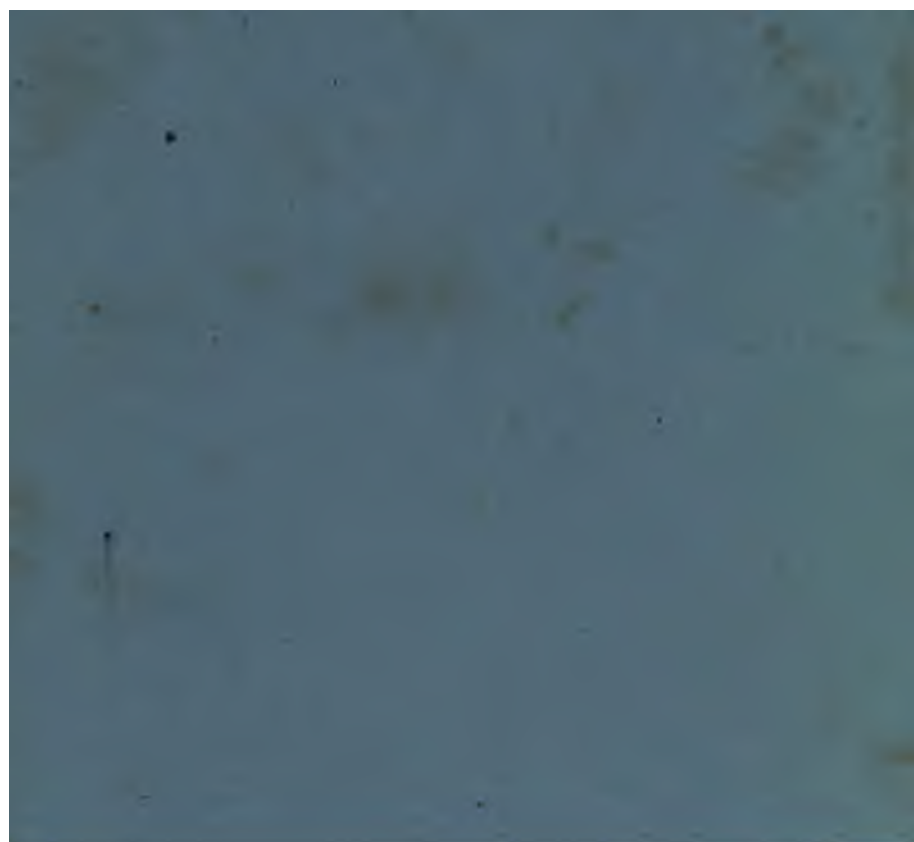
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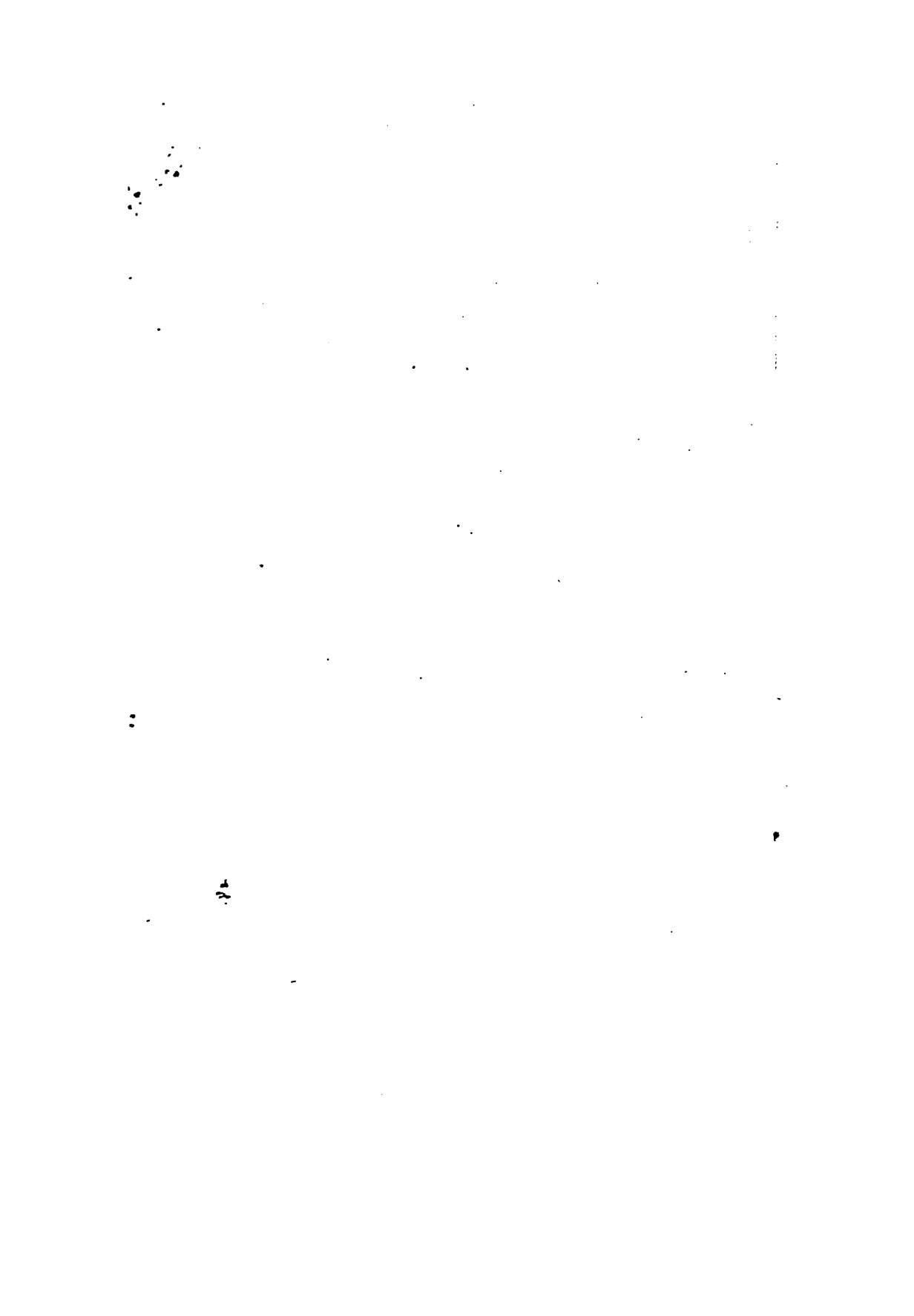
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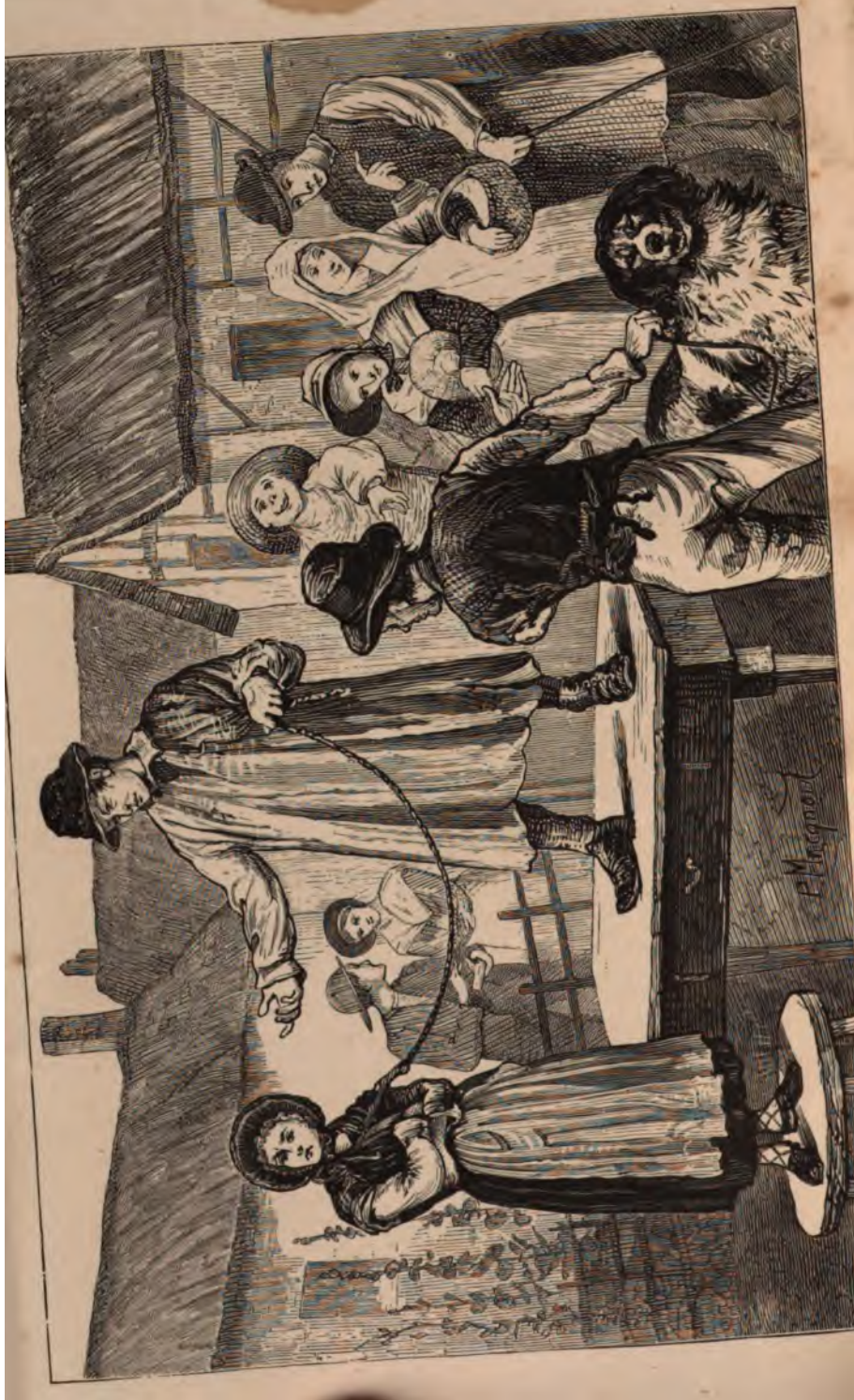












BELGRAVIA

AN

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BELGRAVIA.

NOVEMBER 1876.

GOOD STORIES OF MAN AND OTHER ANIMALS.

BY CHARLES READE.

7. Exchange of Animals.

OLD traditions linger in country places, long after they have perished in great towns. Were the English provinces to be groped for modern antiquities, and the sum total presented, the general reader would be amazed at the mass of ancient superstition lingering in modern England. Not only do Popish practices, Popish legends and charms, flourish in our most Puritanical counties, but even Pagan rites and ceremonies. In the North the mummers, at Christmas, of all days, dance a sword-dance which belongs to the worship of a Scandinavian god; in Northumberland, and parts of Ireland, the young folk still make little bonfires and leap through them on a certain day, though the practice is forbidden in the Old Testament as an abomination, for this is no other thing than 'going through the fire to Baal,' and is one of the many signs that we Celts were an Oriental tribe. Any novice wishing to strike this vein of lore without much trouble has only to read the excellent book of Mr. Henderson, and grope the Index to 'Notes and Queries.' I strongly recommend the latter course.

For Index-reading turns no student pale,
Yet takes the eel of science by the tail.

My own reading in such matters has taught me one thing—to suspect old tradition whenever I encounter any strange practice down in the country. Why, even rustic mispronunciation is often a relic, where it passes for an error. Rusticus calls a Coroner's Inquest 'Crown's Quest,' and the educated smile superior. But Rusticus is not wrong; he is only in arrear; 'Crown's Quest' is the true mediæval form, and was once universal. Every English

peasant calls a theâtre a theâtre, and young gentlemen sneer. Yet theâtre is the true pronunciation; and, fifty years before Shakespeare, nobody, high or low, mispronounced the word into theâtre, as he does, and we do.

To the tenacity of old tradition I ascribe a prevalent notion, in rude parts of this country, that an Englishman and his wife can divorce themselves under certain conditions. 1st. The parties must consent; 2. There must be a public auction; 3. The lady must be sold with a halter round her neck. That our rural population ever invented this law is improbable in itself, and against evidence: there are examples of the practice as old as any chronicle we have; and I really suspect that in some barbarous age, later, perhaps, than our serious worship of Baal, but anterior to our earliest Saxon laws, this rude divorce by consent was the unwritten law of Britain.

The thing has been done in my day many times, and related in the journals, and I observe that it is always done with similar ceremonies, and that the lower order of people, though they jeer, are not shocked at it, nor does it seem to strike them as utterly, and profoundly, illegal. It dates, I apprehend, from a time when marriage was a partnership at will, and the Roman theory that marriage is a sacrament, and the English theory that marriage is not a sacrament, but half a sacrament, were alike unknown to a primitive people.

My note-book contains numerous examples. I select one with a bit of colour, which was published at the date when it occurred.

Joseph Thompson rented a farm of forty acres in a village three miles from Carlisle. In 1829 he married a spruce, lively girl twenty-two years of age.

They had many disputes, and no children. So after three years they agreed to part.

The Bell-man was sent round the village to announce that Joseph Thompson would sell Mary Anne Thompson by auction on April 5, 1832, at noon precisely.

At the appointed hour Joseph Thompson stood on a table, and his wife a little below him on an oak chair, with a halter of straw round her neck. He put her up for sale in terms that a bystander thought it worth while to take down on the spot.

‘Gentlemen, I have to offer to your notice my wife, Mary Anne Thompson, otherwise Williamson. It is her wish as well as mine to part for ever; and will be sold without reserve to the highest bidder. Gentlemen, the lot now offered for competition has been to me a bosom serpent. I took it for my comfort and the good of my house; but it became my tormentor, a domestic curse,

a night invasion, and a daily devil. The Lord deliver us from termagant wives, and troublesome widows! Gentlemen, avoid them as you would a mad dog, a roaring lion, a loaded pistol, *cholera morbus*, or any other pestilential phenomenon——

Here it seems to have occurred to Joseph Thompson that he was not going the way to sell his lot at a high figure; so he tried to be more the auctioneer, and less the husband.

‘However’—said he—‘now I have told you her little defects, I will present the bright and sunny side of her. She can read novels, milk cows, and laugh and weep with the same ease that you could toss off a glass of ale. What the poet says of women in general is true to a hair of this one—

Heaven gave to women the peculiar grace
To laugh, to weep, and cheat the human race.

She can make butter and scold the maid; she can sing Moore’s melodies, and plait her own frills and caps. She cannot make rum, nor gin, nor whisky; but she is a good judge of all three from long experience in tasting them. What shall we say for her, with all her perfections and imperfections?—fifty shillings to begin?’

There was a dead silence. He had better have employed George Robins, senior. ‘Cuilibet in suâ arte credendum.’ There was no bidding at all. Then the auctioneer was angry, and threatened to take the lot home.

The company in general sustained this threat with composure; but one Mears conceived hopes, and asked modestly whether an exchange could not be made. ‘I have here,’ said he, ‘a Newfoundland dog; a beauty. He can fetch and carry; and if you fall in the water, drunk or sober, he’ll pull you out.’

Thompson approved the dog, but objected to give a Christian in even exchange for a quadruped. Each species has a prejudice in its own favour; owing to which the company backed him. So at last Mears agreed to give the dog and twenty shillings to boot.

The bargain was made. Thompson took the halter off the wife, and put it round the dog, and Mears led his purchase away by the hand amidst the shouts and huzzas of the multitude, in which they were joined by Thompson.

After a while, however, the latter recollected that he had a duty to perform. ‘I must drink the new-married couple’s health,’ said he gravely. Accordingly, he adjourned with his dog and his money to the public-house, and toasted his deliverer so zealously that he took nothing home from the sale except the dog. Fortunately for *him*, a man can’t drink his superior.

Astrology.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.

'Signs and planets, in aspects sextile, quartile, trine, conjoined, or opposite; houses of heaven, with their cusps, hours, and minutes; Almuten, Almochoden, Anahibazon, Catahibazon: a thousand terms of equal sound and significance.'—GUY MANNERING.

Come and see! trust thine own eyes.
A fearful sign stands in the house of life,
An enemy; a fiend lurks close behind
The radiance of thy planet—oh! be warned!—COLERIDGE.

ALTHOUGH astronomers now reject altogether the doctrines of judicial astrology, it is impossible for the true lover of that science to regard astrology altogether with contempt. Astronomy, indeed, owes much more to the notions of believers in astrology than is commonly supposed. Astrology bears the same relation to modern astronomy that alchemy bears to modern chemistry. As it is probable that nothing but the hope of gain, literally in this case *auri sacra fames*, would have led to those laborious researches of the alchemists which first taught men how to analyse matter into its elementary constituents, and afterwards to combine these constituents afresh into new forms, so the belief that, by carefully studying the stars, men might acquire the power of predicting future events, first directed attention to the movements of the celestial bodies. Kepler's saying, that astrology, though a fool, was the daughter of a wise mother,¹ does not by any means present truly the relationship between astrology and astronomy. Rather we may say that astrology and alchemy, though foolish mothers, gave birth to those wise daughters, astronomy and chemistry. Even this way of speaking scarcely does justice to the astrologers and alchemists of old times. Their views appear foolish in the light of modern scientific knowledge, but they were not foolish in relation to what was known when they were entertained. Modern analysis goes far to demonstrate the immutability, and, consequently, the non-transmutability of the metals, though it is by no means so certain as many suppose that the present position of the metals in the list of *elements* is really correct; and certainly a chemist of our day would be thought very unwise who should undertake a series of researches with the object of discovering a mineral having such qualities as the

¹ Preface to the *Rudolphine Tables*.

alchemists attributed to the philosopher's stone. But when as yet the facts on which the science of chemistry is based were unknown, there was nothing unreasonable in supposing that such a mineral might exist, or the means of compounding it be discovered. Nay, many arguments from analogy might be urged to show that the supposition was altogether probable. In like manner, though the known facts of astronomy oppose themselves irresistibly to any belief in planetary influences upon the fates of men and nations, yet before those facts were discovered it was not only not unreasonable, but was, in fact, highly reasonable to believe in such influences, or at least that the sun, and moon, and stars moved in the heavens in such sort as to indicate what would happen. If the wise men of old times rejected the belief that 'the stars in their courses fought' for or against men, they yet could not very readily abandon the belief that the stars were for signs in the heavens of what was to befall mankind.

If we consider the reasoning now commonly thought valid in favour of the doctrine that other orbs besides our earth are inhabited, and compare it with the reasoning on which judicial astrology was based, we shall not find much to choose between the two, so far as logical weight is concerned. Because the only member of the solar system which we can examine closely is inhabited, astronomers infer a certain degree of probability for the belief that the other planets of the system are also inhabited; and because the only sun we know much about is the centre of a system of planets, astronomers infer that probably the stars, those other suns which people space, are also the centres of systems; although no telescope which men can make would show the members of a system like ours, attending on even the nearest of all the stars. The astrologer had a similar argument for his belief. The moon, as she circles around the earth, exerts a manifest influence upon terrestrial matter—the tidal wave rising and sinking synchronously with the movements of the moon, and other consequences depending directly or indirectly upon her revolution around the earth. The sun's influence is still more manifest; and, though it may have required the genius of a Herschel or of a Stephenson to perceive that almost every form of terrestrial energy is derived from the sun, yet it must have been manifest from the very earliest times that the greater light which rules the day rules the seasons also, and, in ruling them, provides the annual supplies of vegetable food, on which the very existence of men and animals depends. If these two bodies, the sun and moon, are thus potent, must it not be supposed, reasoned the astronomers of old, that the other celestial bodies exert corresponding influences? We know,

but they did not know, that the moon rules the tides effectually because she is near to us, and that the sun is second only to the moon in tidal influence because of his enormous mass and attractive energy. We know also that his qualities, as fire, light, and life of the earth and its inhabitants, are due directly to the tremendous heat with which the whole of his mighty frame is instinct. Not knowing this, the astronomers of old times had no sufficient reason for distinguishing the sun and moon from the other celestial bodies, so far at least as the general question of celestial influences was concerned. And, so far as particulars were concerned, it was not altogether so clear to them as it is to us that the influence of the sun must be paramount in all respects save tidal action, and that of the moon second only to the sun's in other respects, and superior to his in tidal sway alone. Just as many writers on the subject of life in other worlds are prepared to show (as Brewster attempts to do, for example) that Jupiter and Saturn are far nobler worlds than the earth, because superior in this or that circumstance, so the ancient astronomers, in their ignorance of the actual conditions on which celestial influences depend, found abundant reasons for regarding the feeble influences exerted by Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, as really more potent than those exerted by the sun himself upon the earth. They reasoned, as Milton afterwards made Raphael reason, that 'great or bright infers not excellence,' that Saturn or Jupiter, though 'in comparison so small, nor glist'ring' to like degree, may yet 'of solid good contain more plenty than the sun.' Supposing the influence of a celestial body to depend on the magnitude of its sphere, in the sense of the old astronomy, (according to which each planet had its proper sphere around the earth as centre,) then the influence of the sun would be judged to be inferior to that of either Saturn, Jupiter, or Mars; while the influences of Venus and Mercury, though inferior to the influence of the sun, would still be held superior to that of the moon. For the ancients measured the spheres of the seven planets of their system by the periods of the apparent revolution of those bodies around the celestial dome, and so set the sphere of the moon innermost, enclosed by the sphere of Mercury, around which in turn was the sphere of Venus, next the sun's, then, in order, those of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. And we can readily understand how they might come to regard the slow motions of the spheres of Saturn and Jupiter, &c., taking respectively some thirty and twelve years to complete a revolution, as indicating power superior to the sun's, whose sphere seemed to revolve once in a single year. And many other considerations might have been urged before the Copernican theory was

established, to show that, possibly, some of the planets exert influences more effective than those of the sun and moon.

It is, indeed, clear that the first real shock sustained by astrology came from the arguments of Copernicus. So long as the earth was regarded as the centre round which all the celestial bodies move, it was hopeless to attempt to shake men's faith in the influences of the stars. So far as I know, there is not a single instance of a believer in the old Ptolemaic system who rejected astrology absolutely. The views of Bacon—the last of any note who opposed the system of Copernicus¹—indicate the extreme limits to which a Ptolemaist could go in opposition to astrology. It may be worth while to quote Bacon's opinion in this place, because it indicates at once very accurately the position held by believers in astrology in his day, and the influence which the belief in a central fixed earth could not fail to exert on the minds of even the most philosophical reasoners.

'Astrology,' he begins, 'is so full of superstition that scarce anything sound can be discovered in it; though we judge it should rather be purged than absolutely rejected. Yet if anyone shall pretend that this science is founded not in reason and physical contemplations, but in the direct experience and observation of past ages, and therefore not to be examined by physical reasons, as the Chaldæans boasted, he may at the same time bring back divination, auguries, soothsaying, and give in to all kinds of fables; for these also were said to descend from long experience. But we receive astrology as a part of physics, without attributing more to it than reason and the evidence of things allow, and strip it of its superstition and conceits. Thus we banish that empty notion about the horary reign of the planets, as if each resumed the throne thrice in twenty-four hours, so as to leave three hours supernumerary; and yet this fiction produced the division of the week,² a thing so ancient, and so universally received. Thus like-

¹ It is commonly stated that Bacon opposed the Copernican theory because he disliked Gilbert, who had advocated it. 'Bacon,' says one of his editors, 'was too jealous of Gilbert to entertain one moment any doctrine that he advanced.' But, apart from the incredible littleness of mind which this explanation imputes to Bacon, it would also have been an incredible piece of folly on Bacon's part to advocate an inferior theory while a rival was left to support a better theory. Bacon saw clearly enough that men were on their way to the discovery of the true theory, and, so far as in him lay, he indicated how they should proceed in order most readily to reach the truth. It must, then, have been from conviction, not out of mere contradiction, that Bacon declared himself in favour of the Ptolemaic system. In fact, he speaks of the diurnal motion of the earth as 'an opinion which we can demonstrate to be most false;' doubtless having in his thoughts some such arguments as misled Tycho Brahe.

² To Bacon's theological contemporaries this must have seemed a dreadful heresy, and possibly in our own days the assertion would be judged scarcely less harshly, seeing that the observance of the (so-called) Sabbath depends directly upon the belief

wise we reject as an idle figment the doctrine of horoscopes, and the distribution of the houses, though these are the darling inventions of astrology, which have kept revel, as it were, in the heavens. And lastly, for the calculation of nativities, fortunes, good or bad hours of business, and the like fatalities, they are mere levities, that have little in them of certainty and solidity, and may be plainly confuted by physical reasons. But here we judge it proper to lay down some rules for the examination of astrological matters, in order to retain what is useful therein, and reject what is insignificant. Thus, 1. Let the greater revolutions be retained, but the lesser, of horoscopes and houses, be rejected—the former being like ordnance which shoot to a great distance, whilst the other are but like small bows, that do no execution. 2. The celestial operations affect not all kinds of bodies, but only the more sensible, as humours, air, and spirits. 3. All the celestial operations rather extend to masses of things than to individuals, though they may obliquely reach some individuals also, which are more sensible than the rest, as a pestilent constitution of the air affects those bodies which are least able to resist it. 4. All the celestial operations produce not their effects instantaneously, and in a narrow compass, but exert them in large portions of time and space. Thus predictions as to the temperature of a year may hold good, but not with regard to single days. 5. There is no fatal necessity in the stars; and this, the more prudent astrologers have constantly allowed. 6. We will add one thing more, which, if amended and improved, might make for astrology—viz. that we are certain the celestial bodies have other influences besides heat and light, but these influences act not otherwise than by the foregoing rules, though they lie so deep in physics as to require a fuller explanation. So that, upon the whole, we must register as needed,¹ an astrology written in conformity with these principles, under the name of *Astrologia Sana*.² Bacon then proceeds to show what this just astrology should comprehend—as, 1, the doctrine of the commixture of rays; 2, the effect of nearest approaches and farthest removes of planets to and from the point overhead, (the planets, like the sun, having their summer and winter;) 3, the effects of distance, ‘with a proper enquiry into what the vigour of the planets may perform of itself, and what through their nearness to us; for,’ he adds, but unfortunately without assigning any

in quite another origin of the week. Yet there can be little question that the week really had its origin in astrological formulæ.

¹ In Bohn's edition the word ‘defective’ is here used, entirely changing the meaning of the sentence. Bacon registers an *Astrologia Sana* amongst the things needed for the advancement of learning, whereas he is made to say that such an astrology must be registered as defective.

reason for the statement, 'a planet is more brisk when most remote, but more communicative when nearest;' 4, the other accidents of the planet's motions, as they pursue

Their wand'ring course, now high, now low, then hid,
Progressive, retrograde, or standing still;

5, all that can be discovered of the general nature of the planets and fixed stars, considered in their own essence and activity; 6, lastly, let this just astrology, he says, 'contain, from tradition, the particular natures and alterations of the planets and fixed stars; for' (here is a reason indeed) 'as these are delivered with general consent, they are not lightly to be rejected, unless they directly contradict physical considerations. Of such observations, let a just astrology be formed; and according to these alone should schemes of the heavens be made and interpreted.'

The astrology thus regarded by Bacon as sane and just did not differ, as to its primary object, from the false systems which now seem to us so absurd. 'Let this astrology be used with greater confidence in prediction,' says Bacon, 'but more cautiously in election, and in both cases with due moderation.' Thus predictions may be made of comets, and all kinds of meteors, inundations, droughts, heats, frosts, earthquakes, fiery eruptions, winds, great rains, the seasons of the year, plagues, epidemic diseases, plenty, famine, wars, seditions, sects, transmigrations of people, and all commotions, or great innovations of things, natural and civil. Predictions may possibly be made more particular, though with less certainty, if, when the general tendencies of the times are found, a good philosophical or political judgment applies them to such things as are most liable to accidents of this kind. For example, from a foreknowledge of the seasons of any year, they might be apprehended more destructive to olives than grapes, more hurtful in distempers of the lungs than the liver, more pernicious to the inhabitants of hills than valleys, and, for want of provisions, to monks than courtiers, &c. Or if anyone, from a knowledge of the influence which the celestial bodies have upon the spirits of mankind, should find it would affect the people more than their rulers, learned and inquisitive men more than the military, &c. For there are innumerable things of this kind, that require not only a general knowledge gained from the stars, which are the agents, but also a particular one of the passive subjects. Nor are elections to be wholly rejected, though not so much to be trusted as predictions; for we find in planting, sowing, and grafting, observations of the moon are not absolutely trifling, and there are many particulars of this kind. But elections are more to be *curbed* by our rules than predictions; and

this must always be remembered, that election only holds in such cases where the virtue of the heavenly bodies, and the action of the inferior bodies also, is not transient as in the examples just mentioned; for the increases of the moon and planets are not sudden things. But punctuality of time should here be absolutely rejected. And perhaps there are more of these instances to be found in civil matters than some would imagine.'

The method of inquiry suggested by Bacon as proper for determining the just rules of the astrology he advocated was, as might be expected, chiefly inductive. There are, said he, 'but four ways of arriving at this science, viz.: 1, by future experiments; 2, past experiments; 3, traditions; 4, physical reasons.' But he was not very hopeful as to the progress of the suggested researches. It is vain, he said, to think at present of future experiments, because many ages are required to procure a competent stock of them. As for the past, it is true that past experiments are within our reach, 'but it is a work of labour and much time to procure them. Thus astrologers may, if they please, draw from real history all greater accidents, as inundations, plagues, wars, seditions, deaths of kings, &c., as also the positions of the celestial bodies, not according to fictitious horoscopes, but the above-mentioned rules of their revolutions, or such as they really were at the time, and, when the event conspires, erect a probable rule of prediction.' Traditions would require to be carefully sifted and those thrown out which manifestly clashed with physical considerations, leaving those in full force which complied with such considerations. Lastly, the physical reasons worthiest of being enquired into are those, said Bacon, 'which search into the universal appetites and passions of matter, and the simple genuine motions of the heavenly bodies.'

It is evident there was much which, in our time at least, would be regarded as wild and fanciful in the 'sound and just astrology' advocated by Bacon. Yet, in passing, it may be noticed that even in our own time we have seen similar ideas promulgated, not by common astrologers and fortune-tellers (who, indeed, know nothing about such matters), but by persons supposed to be well informed in matters scientific. In a roundabout way, a new astrology has been suggested, which is not at all unlike Bacon's 'astrologia sana,' though not based, as he proposed that that astrology should be, on experiment, or tradition, or physical reasons. It has been suggested, first, that the seasons of our earth are affected by the condition of the sun in the matter of spots, and very striking evidence has been collected to show that this must be the case. For instance, *it has been found that years when the sun has been free from spots*

have been warmer than the average; and it has also been found that such years have been cooler than the average—a double-shotted argument wholly irresistible, especially when it is also found that when the sun has many spots the weather has sometimes been exceptionally warm and sometimes exceptionally cold. If this be not considered sufficient, then note that in one country or continent or hemisphere the weather, when the sun is most spotted (or least, as the case may be), may be singularly hot, while in another country, continent, or hemisphere, the weather may be as singularly cold. So with wind and calm, rain and drought, and so forth. Always, whether the sun is very much spotted or quite free from spots, something unusual in the way of weather must be going on somewhere, demonstrating in the most significant way the influence of sun-spots or the want of sun-spots on the weather. It is true that captious minds might say that this method of reasoning proved too much in many ways, as, for example, thus—always, whether the sun is very much spotted or quite free from spots, some remarkable event, as a battle, massacre, domestic tragedy on a large scale, or the like, may be going on, demonstrating in the most significant way the influence of sun-spots or the want of sun-spots on the passions of men,—which sounds absurd. But the answer is twofold. First, such reasoning is captious, and secondly, it is not certain that sun-spots, or the want of them, may not influence human passions; it may be worth while to enquire into this possible solar influence as well as the other, which can be done by crossing the hands of the new fortune-tellers with a sufficient amount of the precious metal which astrologers have in all ages dedicated to the sun. That the new system of divination is not solely solar, but partly planetary also, is seen when we remember that the sun-spots wax and wane in periods of time which are manifestly referable to the planetary motions. Thus, the great solar spot period lasts about eleven years, the successive spotless epochs being separated on the average by about that time; and so nearly does this period agree with the period of the planet Jupiter's revolution around the sun, that during eight consecutive spot-periods the spots were most numerous when Jupiter was farthest from the sun, and it is only by going back to the periods preceding these eight that we find a time when the reverse happened, the spots being most numerous when Jupiter was nearest to the sun. So with various other periods which the ingenuity of Messrs. De la Rue and Balfour Stewart has detected, and which, under the closest scrutiny, exhibit almost exact agreement for many successive periods, preceded and followed by almost exact disagreement. Here, again, the captious may argue that such *alternate agreements and disagreements* may be

noted in every case where two periods are not very unequal, whether there be any connection between them or not, but much more frequently when there is no connection; and that the only evidence really proving a connection between planetary motions and the solar spots would be constant agreement between solar spot periods and particular planetary periods. But the progress of science, and especially the possible erection of a new observatory for finding out ('for a consideration') how sun-spots affect the weather, &c., ought not to be interfered with by captious reasoners in this objectionable manner. Nor need any other answer be given them. Seeing, then, that sun-spots manifestly affect the weather and the seasons, while the planets rule the sun-spots, it is clear that the planets really rule the seasons. And again, seeing that the planets rule the seasons, while the seasons largely affect the well-being of men and nations (to say nothing of animals), it follows that the planets influence the fates of men, and nations, and animals. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Let us return, however, to the more reasonable astrology of the ancients, and enquire into some of the traditions which Bacon considered worthy of attention in framing the precepts of a sound and just astrology.

It was natural that the astrologers of old should regard the planetary influences as depending in the main on the position of the celestial bodies on the sky above the person or place whose fortunes were in question. Thus two men at the same moment in Rome and in Persia would by no means have the same horoscope cast for their nativities, so that their fortunes, according to the principles of judicial astrology, would be quite different. In fact, it might happen that two men, born at the same instant of time, would have all the principal circumstances of their lives contrasted—planets riding high in the heavens of one, being below the horizon of the other, and *vice versâ*.

The celestial sphere placed as at the moment of the native's birth was divided into twelve parts by great circles supposed to pass through the point overhead, and its opposite, the point vertically beneath the feet. These twelve divisions were called 'houses.' The first, called the Ascendant House, was the portion rising above the horizon at the east. It was regarded as the House of Life, the planets located therein at the moment of birth having most potent influence on the life and destiny of the native. Such planets were said to rule the ascendant, being in the ascending house; and it is from this usage that our familiar expression that such and such an influence is 'in the ascendant' is derived. The *next* house was the House of Riches, and was one-third of the way

from the east below the horizon towards the place of the sun at midnight. The third was the House of Kindred, short journeys, letters, messages, &c. It was two-thirds of the way towards the place of the midnight sun. The fourth was the House of Parents, and was the house which the sun reached at midnight. The fifth was the House of Children and Women, also of all sorts of amusements, theatres, banquets, and merry-making. The sixth was the House of Sickness. The seventh was the House of Love and Marriage. These three houses (the fifth, sixth, and seventh) followed in order from the fourth, so as to correspond to the part of the sun's path below the horizon, between his place at midnight and his place when descending in the west. The seventh, opposite to the first, was the Descendant. The eighth house was the first house above the horizon, lying to the west, and was the House of Death. The ninth house, next to the mid-heaven on the west, was the House of Religion, science, learning, books, and long voyages. The tenth, which was in the mid-heaven, or region occupied by the sun at midday, was the House of Honour, denoting credit, renown, profession or calling, trade, preferment, &c. The eleventh house, next to the mid-heaven on the east, was the House of Friends. Lastly, the twelfth house was the House of Enemies.

The houses were not all of equal potency. The *angular* houses, which are the first, the fourth, the seventh, and the tenth—lying east, north, west, and south—were first in power, whether for good or evil. The second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh houses were called *succedents*, as following the angular houses, and next to them in power. The remaining four houses—viz. the third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth houses—were called *cadents*, and were regarded as weakest in influence. The houses were regarded as alternately masculine and feminine: the first, third, fifth, &c., being masculine; while the second, fourth, sixth, &c., were feminine.

It will be easily understood how these houses were dealt with in erecting a scheme of nativity. The position of the planets at the moment of the native's birth, in the several houses, determined his fortunes with regard to the various matters associated with these houses. Thus planets of good influence in the native's ascendant, or first house, signified generally a prosperous life; but if at the same epoch a planet of malefic influence was in the seventh house, then the native, though on the whole prosperous, would be unfortunate in marriage. A good planet in the tenth house signified good fortune and honour in office or business, and generally a prosperous career as distinguished from a happy life; but evil planets in the ninth house would suggest to the native

caution in undertaking long voyages, or entering upon religious or scientific controversies. Similar considerations applied to questions relating to horary astronomy, in which the position of the planets in the various houses at some epoch guided the astrologer's opinion as to the fortune of that hour, either in the life of a man or the career of a State. In such enquiries, however, not only the position of the planets, &c. at the time had to be considered, but also the original horoscope of the person, or the special planets and signs associated with particular States. Thus if Jupiter, the most fortunate of all the planets, was in the ascendant, or in the House of Honour, at the time of the native's birth, and at some epoch this planet was ill-aspected or afflicted by other planets potent for evil in the native's horoscope, then that epoch would be a threatening one in the native's career. The sign Gemini was regarded by astrologers as especially associated with the fortunes of London, and accordingly they tell us that the great fire of London, the plague, the building of London Bridge, and other events interesting to London, all occurred when this sign was in the ascendant, or when special planets were in this sign.¹

¹ The astrologers were exceedingly ingenious in showing that their art had given warning of the great plague and fire of London. Thus, the star which marks the Bull's northern horn—and which is described by Ptolemy as like Mars—was, they say, exactly in that part of the sign Gemini which is the ascendant of London, in 1666. Lilly, however, for whom they claim the credit of predicting the year of this calamity, laid no claim himself to that achievement; nay, specially denied that he knew when the fire was to happen. The story is rather curious. In 1651 Lilly had published his *Monarchy or no Monarchy*, which contained a number of curious hieroglyphics. Amongst these were two which appeared to portend plague and fire respectively. The hieroglyphic of the plague represents three dead bodies wrapped in death-clothes, and for these bodies two coffins lie ready and two graves are being dug; whence it was to be inferred that the number of deaths would exceed the supply of coffins and graves. The hieroglyphic of the fire represents several persons, gentlefolk on one side and commonfolk on the other, emptying water-vessels on a furious fire into which two children are falling headlong. The occurrence of the plague in 1665 attracted no special notice to Lilly's supposed prediction of that event, though probably many talked of the coincidence as remarkable. But when in 1666 the great fire occurred, the House of Commons summoned Lilly to attend the committee appointed to enquire into the cause of the fire. 'At two of the clock, on Friday, the 25th of October, 1666,' he attended in the Speaker's chamber, 'to answer such questions as should then and there be asked him.' Sir Robert Brooke spoke to this effect: 'Mr. Lilly, this committee thought fit to summon you to appear before them this day, to know if you can say anything as to the cause of the late fire, or whether there might be any design therein. You are called the rather hither, because, in a book of yours long since printed, you hinted some such thing by one of your hieroglyphics.' 'Unto which he replied: "May it please your honours, after the beheading of the late king, considering that in the three subsequent years the Parliament acted nothing which concerned the settlement of the nation's peace, and seeing the generality of the people dissatisfied, the citizens of London discontented, and the soldiery prone to mutiny, I was desirous, according to the best knowledge God had given me, to make enquiry by the art I studied what might, from that time, happen unto the Parliament and nation in general. At last, having satisfied myself as well as I could, and perfected my judgment therein,

The signs of the zodiac in the various houses were in the first place to be noted, because not only had these signs special powers in special houses, but the effects of the planets in particular houses varied according to the signs in which the planets were situated. If we were to follow the description given by the astrologers themselves, not much insight would be thrown upon the meaning of the zodiacal signs. For instance, astrologers say that Aries is a vernal, dry, fiery, masculine, cardinal, equinoctial, diurnal, movable, commanding, eastern, choleric, violent, and quadrupedalian sign. We may, however, infer generally from their accounts the influences which they assigned to the zodiacal signs.

Aries is the house and joy of Mars, signifies a dry constitution, long face and neck, thick shoulders, swarthy complexion, and a hasty passionate temper. It governs the head and face, and all diseases relating thereto. It reigns over England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Lesser Poland, Syria, Naples, Capua, Verona, &c. It is a masculine sign, and is regarded as fortunate.

Taurus gives to the native born under his auspices a stout athletic frame, broad bull-like forehead, dark curly hair, short neck, and so forth, and a dull apathetic temper, exceedingly cruel and malicious if once aroused. It governs the neck and throat, and reigns over Ireland, Great Poland, part of Russia, Holland, Persia, Asia Minor, the Archipelago, Mantua, Leipsic, &c. It is a feminine sign, and unfortunate.

Gemini is the house of Mercury. The native of Gemini will have a sanguine complexion and tall straight figure, dark eyes quick and piercing, brown hair, active ways, and will be of exceedingly ingenious intellect. It governs the arms and shoulders, and rules over the south-west parts of England, America, Flanders, Lombardy, Sardinia, Armenia, Lower Egypt, London, Versailles, Brabant, &c. It is a masculine sign, and fortunate.

Cancer is the house of the Moon and exaltation of Jupiter, and

I thought it most convenient to signify my intentions and conceptions thereof in forms, shapes, types, hieroglyphics, &c., without any commentary, that so my judgment might be concealed from the vulgar, and made manifest only unto the wise; I herein imitating the examples of many wise philosophers who had done the like. Having found sir, that the great city of London should be sadly afflicted with a great plague, and not long after with an exorbitant fire, I framed these two hieroglyphics, as represented in the book, which in effect have proved very true." "Did you foresee the year?" said one. "I did not," said Lilly; "nor was desirous; of that I made no scrutiny. Now, sir, whether there was any design of burning the city, or any employed to that purpose, I must deal ingenuously with you; that since the fire I have taken much pains in the search thereof, but cannot or could not give myself the least satisfaction therein. I conclude that it was the finger of God only; but what instruments He used thereunto I am ignorant."

its native will be of fair but pale complexion, round face, grey or mild blue eyes, weak voice, the upper part of the body large, slender arms, small feet, and an effeminate constitution. It governs the breast and stomach, and reigns over Scotland, Holland, Zealand, Burgundy, Africa, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Constantinople, New York, &c. It is a feminine sign, and unfortunate.

The native born under Leo will be of large body, broad shoulders, austere countenance, with dark eyes and tawny hair, strong voice, and leonine character, resolute and ambitious, but generous, free, and courteous. Leo governs the heart and back, and reigns over Italy, Bohemia, France, Sicily, Rome, Bristol, Bath, Taunton, Philadelphia, &c. It is a masculine sign, and fortunate.

Virgo is the joy of Mercury. Its natives are of moderate stature, seldom handsome, slender but compact, thrifty and ingenious. It governs the abdomen, and reigns over Turkey both in Europe and Asia, Greece, Mesopotamia, Crete, Jerusalem, Paris, Lyons, &c. It is a feminine sign, and generally unfortunate.

Libra is the house of Venus. The natives of Libra are tall and well-made, elegant in person, round-faced and ruddy, but plain-featured and 'inclined to eruptions that disfigure the face when old; they' (the natives) 'are of sweet disposition, just and upright in dealing.' It governs the lumbar regions, and reigns over Austria, Alsace, Savoy, Portugal, Livonia, India, Ethiopia, Lisbon, Vienna, Frankfort, Antwerp, Charleston, &c. It is a masculine sign, and fortunate.

Scorpio is, like Aries, the house of Mars, 'and also his joy.' Its natives are strong, corpulent, and robust, with large bones, 'dark curly hair and eyes' (presumably the eyes dark only), middle stature, dusky complexion, active bodies: they are usually reserved in speech. It governs the region of the groin, and reigns over Judæa, Mauritania, Catalonia, Norway, West Silesia, Upper Batavia, Barbary, Morocco, Valentia, Messina, &c. It is feminine, and unfortunate. (It would appear likely, by the way, that astrology was a purely masculine science.)

Sagittarius is the house and joy of Jupiter. Its natives are well formed and tall, ruddy, handsome, and jovial, with fine clear eyes, chestnut hair, and oval fleshy face. They are 'generally jolly fellows at either bin or board,' active, intrepid, generous, and obliging. It governs the legs and thighs,¹ and reigns over Arabia

¹ Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek were evidently not well taught in astrology. 'Shall we set about some revels?' says the latter. 'What shall we do else?' says Toby; 'were we not born under Taurus?' 'Taurus, that's sides and heart,' says sapient Andrew. 'No, sir,' responds Toby, 'it's legs and thighs. Let me see thee caper.'

Felix, Spain, Hungary, Moravia, Liguria, Narbonne, Cologne, Avignon, &c. It is masculine, and of course fortunate.

Capricorn is the house of Saturn and exaltation of Mars. This sign gives to its natives a dry constitution and slender make, with a long thin visage, thin beard (a generally goatly aspect, in fact), dark hair, long neck, narrow chin and weak knees. It governs, nevertheless, the knees and hams, and reigns over India, Macedonia, Thrace and Greece, Mexico, Saxony, Wilna, Mecklenburgh, Brandenburg, and Oxford. It is feminine, and unfortunate.

Aquarius also is the house of Saturn. Its natives are robust, steady, strong, healthy, and of middle stature; delicate complexion, clear but not pale, sandy hair, hazel eyes, and generally an honest disposition. It governs the legs and ankles, and reigns over Arabia Petrea, Tartary, Russia, Denmark, Lower Sweden, Westphalia, Hamburg, and Bremen. It is masculine, and fortunate.

Pisces is the house of Jupiter, and exaltation of Venus. Its natives are short, pale, thick-set, and round-shouldered (like fish), in character phlegmatic and effeminate. It governs the feet and toes, and reigns over Portugal, Spain, Egypt, Normandy, Galicia, Ratisbon, Calabria, &c. It is feminine, and therefore naturally unfortunate.

We have still to consider the influences assigned to the various planets and constellations, and to examine the general rules for casting nativities, ruling the planets, and determining particular questions by reference to the celestial bodies. But these and other matters must be left to the second part of this essay. In this place, however, I would call attention to the circumstances which give to the subject of astrology a real interest. It is hardly necessary to say that, in our time, no importance whatever can attach to any discussion of the considerations which led to the rejection of judicial astrology. None but the most ignorant, and therefore superstitious, believe at present in divination of any sort or kind whatsoever. Divination by the stars holds no higher position than palmistry, fortune-telling by cards, or the indications of the future which foolish persons find in dreams, tea-dregs, salt-spilling, and other absurdities. But there are two reasons which render the history of astrology interesting. In the first place, faith in stellar influences was once so widespread that astrological terminology came to form a part of ordinary language, insomuch that it is impossible rightly to understand many passages of ancient and mediæval literature, or rightly to apprehend the force of many allusions and expressions, unless the significance of astrological teachings to the men of those times be recognised. In the second place, it is interesting to examine how the erroneous

teachings of astrology were gradually abandoned, to note the way in which various orders of mind rejected these false doctrines or struggled to retain them, and to perceive how, with a large proportion of even the most civilised races, the superstitions of judicial astrology were retained, and are retained even to this very day. The world has still to see some superstitions destroyed which are as widely received as astrology ever was, and which will probably retain their influence over many minds long after the reasoning portion of the community have rejected them.

Even so far back as the time of Eudoxus the pretensions of astrologers were rejected, as Cicero informs us ('*De Div.*' ii. 42). And though the Romans were strangely superstitious in such matters, Cicero reasons with excellent judgment against the belief in astrology. Gassendi quotes the argument drawn by Cicero against astrology, from the predictions of the Chaldæans that Cæsar, Crassus, and Pompey would die 'in a full old age, in their own houses, in peace and honour,' whose deaths, nevertheless, were 'violent, immature, and tragical.' Cicero also used an argument whose full force has only been recognised in modern times. 'What contagion,' he asked, 'can reach us from the planets, whose distance is almost infinite?' It is singular that Seneca, who was well acquainted with the uniform character of the planetary motions, seems to have entertained no doubt respecting their influence. Tacitus expresses some doubts, but seems on the whole inclined to believe in astrology. 'Certainly,' he says, 'the majority of mankind cannot be weaned from the opinion that at the birth of each man his future destiny is fixed; though some things may fall out differently from the predictions, by the ignorance of those who profess the art; and that thus the art is unjustly blamed, confirmed as it is by noted examples in all ages.'¹

¹ These reflections were suggested to Tacitus by the conduct of Thrasyllus (chief astrologer of the Emperor Tiberius), when his skill was tested by his imperial employer after a manner characteristic of that agreeable monarch. The story runs thus (I follow Whewell's version): 'Those who were brought to Tiberius on any important matter, were admitted to an interview in an apartment situated on a lofty cliff in the island of Capree. They reached this place by a narrow path, accompanied by a single freed-man of great bodily strength; and on their return, if the emperor had conceived any doubts of their trustworthiness, a single blow buried the secret and its victim in the ocean below. After Thrasyllus had, in this retreat, stated the results of his art as they concerned the emperor, Tiberius asked him whether he had calculated how long he himself had to live. The astrologer examined the aspect of the stars, and while he did this showed hesitation, alarm, increasing terror, and at last declared that "the present hour was for him critical, perhaps fatal." Tiberius embraced him, and told him "he was right in supposing he had been in danger, but that he should escape it," and made him henceforward his confidential counsellor.' It is evident, assuming the story to be true (as seems sufficiently probable), that the emperor was no match for the charlatan in craft. It was a natural thought on the former's part to test the skill

Probably, the doubt suggested by the different fortunes and characters of men born at the same time must have occurred to many before Cicero dwelt upon it. Pliny, who followed Cicero in this, does not employ the argument quite correctly, for he says that, 'in every hour, in every part of the world, are born lords and slaves, kings and beggars.' But of course, according to astrological principles, it would be necessary that two persons, whose fortunes were to be alike, should be born, not only in the same hour, but in the same place. The fortunes and character of Jacob and Esau, however, should manifestly have been similar, which was certainly not the case, if their history has been correctly handed down to us. An astrologer of the time of Julius Cæsar, named Publius Nigidius Figulus, used 'a singular argument against such reasoning. When an opponent urged the different fortunes of men born nearly at the same instant, Nigidius asked him to make two contiguous marks on a potter's wheel which was revolving rapidly. When the wheel was stopped, the two marks were found to be far apart. Nigidius is said to have received the name of Figulus (the potter), in remembrance of the story; but more probably he was a potter by trade, and an astrologer only during those leisure hours which he could devote to charlatantry. St. Augustine, who relates the story (which I borrow from Whewell's 'History of the Inductive Sciences'), says, justly, that the argument of Nigidius was as fragile as the ware made on the potter's wheel.

The belief must have been all but universal in those days that at the birth of any person who was to hold an important place in the world's history the stars would either be ominously conjoined, or else some blazing comet or new star would make its appearance. For we know that some such object having appeared, or some unusual conjunction of planets having occurred, near enough to the time of Christ's birth to be associated in men's minds with that event, it came eventually to be regarded as belonging to his horoscope, and as actually indicating to the Wise Men of the East (Chaldæan astrologers, doubtless) the future greatness of the Child then born. It is certain that that is what the story of the Star in the East means as it stands. Theologians differ as to its interpretation in points of detail. Some think the phenomenon was meteoric, others

of his astrologer by laying for him a trap such as the story indicates—a thought so natural, indeed, that it probably occurred to Thrasyllus himself long before Tiberius put the plan into practice. Even if Thrasyllus had not been already on the watch for such a trick, he would have been but a poor trickster himself if he had not detected it the moment it was attempted, or failed to see the sole safe course which was left open to him. Probably, with a man of the temper of Tiberius, such a counter-trick as Galeotti's in *Quentin Durward* would have been unsafe.

that a comet then made its appearance, others that a new star shone out, and others that the account referred to a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, which occurred at about that time. As a matter of detail it may be mentioned, that none of these explanations in the slightest degree corresponds with the account, for neither meteor, nor comet, nor new star, nor conjoined planets, would go before travellers from the east, to show them their way to any place. Yet the ancients sometimes regarded comets as guides. Whichever view we accept, it is abundantly clear that an astrological significance was attached by the narrator to the event. And not so very long ago, when astrologers first began to see that their occupation was passing from them, the Wise Men of the East were appealed to against the enemies of astrology,¹ very much as Moses was appealed to against Copernicus and Galileo, and more recently to protect us against certain relationships which Darwin, Wallace, and Huxley unkindly indicate for the human race divine.

¹ The belief in the influence of the stars and planets on the fortunes of the new-born child was still rife when Shakespeare made Glendower boast :

At my nativity
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes
Of burning cressets ; know, that at my birth
The frame and foundation of the earth
Shook like a coward.

And Shakespeare showed himself dangerously tainted with freethought in assigning (even to the fiery Hotspur) the reply :

So it would have done
At the same season, if your mother's cat
Had kittened, though yourself had ne'er been born.

In a similar vein Butler, in *Hudibras*, ridiculed the folly of those who believe in horoscopes and nativities :

As if the planets' first aspect
The tender infant did infect
In soul and body, and instil
All future good and future ill ;
Which in their dark fatalities lurking,
At destined periods fall a-working,
And break out, like the hidden seeds
Of long diseases, into deeds,
In friendships, enmities, and strife,
And all th' emergencies of life,

Joshua Haggard's Daughter.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT HIS DOOR.

NAOMI thought long and deeply of that last interview with Arnold Pentreath. She was in no wise inclined to admit to herself that the sea-captain could now, or in any time to come, take the place of his missing brother—that the heart which had been so freely and so entirely given to Oswald could ever belong to another. Yet, while looking upon this change of feeling as impossible, Naomi was conscious that Arnold had begun to exercise a powerful influence upon her mind, and that his most unexpected avowal of affection for her had moved her deeply.

He was like his brother, and he loved his brother. These two circumstances were alone sufficient to ensure her regard. And now he had paid her the highest tribute that man can offer to woman. He had given her his loyal and kindly heart—that heart whose wide benevolence she had seen in many an unconsidered act of his life—he had tendered her his happiness, his future; and she had found only one cold answer to his prayer: 'It cannot be.'

'If I loved him better than I ever loved Oswald, my answer must have been the same,' she said to herself in those long hours of sorrowful meditation which made up the larger half of her joyless life. 'While the dark cloud rests upon Oswald's fate, I can have but one answer for any lover—you, Arnold, of all others. How do I know that I have the right to stand up with unbowed head, among honest men and women, when my heart is tortured by the thought that my father—he who preaches the gospel and exhorts other men to repentance—may be the vilest sinner of all!'

This was the gist of Naomi's meditations. She had tried to put that awful fear away from her, but it was rooted in her heart. As weeks and months went by, and brought no news of Oswald, the fear grew stronger; and with the fear came remorse, a slow and consuming anguish. Had she but been patient, had she borne her own burden in silence and kept the secret of that cruel letter, this horror need never have been. She had put the scorpion into her

father's hand—the scorpion which had stung that once noble nature to madness.

‘Oh, my father, my lost and erring father!’ she cried, in an hour when her fear became almost conviction, ‘would to God that I could bear the burden of your sin! ’Twas I who tempted you; it was my vile jealousy that urged you to despair and guilt. Let the avenging rod fall heaviest on me. O God, pity and pardon him! Thou who hast promised pardon and pity for the darkest sin.’

That there might be pardon, even for this last and most hideous sin of blood-guiltiness, Naomi firmly believed: but could there be forgiveness for a sinner who added the sin of hypocrisy to his darker crime, and held his head high among men when it should have been bowed in the dust under the burden of his shame? Could there be pardon for a sinner who kept the secret of his guilt, and pretended to lead other men along the shining path to heaven? No, assuredly. That smooth-faced hypocrisy—the sin for which man's Teacher and Redeemer reserved His most scathing denunciations—must treble the infamy of the darker guilt it masked, and render pardon impossible. To the sinner who repenteth pity and peace had been freely offered, but what mercy was ever promised to the Pharisee who, under the semblance of exceptional piety, concealed a deeper infamy than the worst act of the despised publican?

These thoughts were in Naomi's mind as she sat in her narrow deal pew, in the soft June twilight, listening to her father's preaching. The chapel was full to suffocation, for this was one of those meetings which the people of Combhollow particularly affected; a service in which Joshua Haggard was expected to surpass himself, and in which Satan—so often and so directly appealed to as to seem an actual member of the congregation—was to be worsted and driven forth in confusion by the minister's eloquence. Some even went so far as to call these evening services ‘devil hunts.’ The part which the congregation took in them was not altogether negative or quiescent. There were times when eager spirits assumed an active share in the proceedings—when from smothered sighs, and head-shakings, and hollow groans, as of inward and bodily disorder, the convulsed auditor was moved to speech, and poured forth his Satanic experiences before a hushed and awe-struck congregation. Joshua did not encourage or favour these lay utterances, and his powerful influence and vigorous eloquence did much to hold his flock in check; but he could not always dam the flood of inspiration.

‘You're a powerful praycher, Muster Haggard,’ observed a

weather-beaten old fisherman, whose rambling discourse Joshua strove to arrest, 'but when a hignorant man feels he's gotten the holy Sperrit inside un, he ain't goin' to be cut short before he's had his say. Edication goes for nothin' with the Sperrit. He don't mind grammar.'

Upon this particular evening the flock had been content to express its feelings by means of groans and sighs, and brief ejaculations of a self-abasing character. Joshua stood in his square deal pulpit, with an open Bible on the green-baize cushion, and preached of erring humanity and man's darling sins. His sermons were always extempore, and had of late been obviously without plan or method—a change for the worse, which Naomi was conscious of, but which had scarcely been perceived by the flock—that congregation being satisfied with strong language and a flow of rugged eloquence, without looking too nicely for logical precision or directness. Joshua turned the leaves of his Bible, and seemed to draw new ideas from the page he glanced at.

He had been preaching longer than usual, though his sermons were apt to be long, and the twilight deepened as he stood in his pulpit, leaning forward with his elbow on the desk, and the other hand nervously turning the leaves of the Bible, which there was now scarcely light enough for him to see. He looked pale as ashes in that grey light, but his large, dark eyes gleamed with a sombre fire as they wandered round the upturned faces of his flock. Sometimes his eyes lingered wistfully on the pew where Naomi sat, and on Cynthia's empty place.

'Yes, my brethren,' he cried, 'yes, fellow-sinners, each has his darling sin. The world sees it not, knows it not. The world honours us—we bask in its smiles and favour. Men point to us as ensamples of godly life. Yet the darling sin is there—in our heart of hearts; we hug it close—we hide it from every human eye. But in the still night-watches it comes forth like a serpent out of his hole, and rears its venomous crest, and stings us with the horror of our guilt. We call ourselves soldiers and servants of God, yet know that our real master and captain is the Devil. Yes, my brethren, the great recruiting sergeant has enlisted us. We have taken the Devil's shilling; the image and superscription upon the coin is the image and superscription of Satan.

'Alas, my fellow-sinners! know you how swift a thing it is to fall? The fall of Lucifer himself was but the act and passage of a moment. There was no long deliberation—there was no broad gap of time between heaven and hell. In one hour an angel of light standing near the throne—in the next revolted, fallen, banished, the prince and leader of devils. So, too, with us the fall is swift,

the fall is sudden. We are chosen and elected—called to grace—all our old sins forgiven. This regeneration is the work of a moment. We look back and remember the hour in which the light came down upon us, as at Pentecost. But we may extinguish this light in blackest darkness—we may lose this divine heritage—forget our citizenship in the eternal city—and this extinction, this loss, may be the work of a moment.'

Groans both loud and deep—plaintive, feminine sighs—disjointed ejaculations of 'Alas!' and 'Too true!' spoke the convictions of the assembled sinners.

'Oh, my brethren, wretched sinners, grovelling in the dust and ashes of this little world, if at this moment the last trump should sound, and the heavens be rent asunder, and the Great Judge appear shining in His unspeakable splendour, calling men to judgment, how many among us could answer to that awful summons without fear and trembling, and the knowledge that eternal death was our just doom? How many would He find in this crowded chapel fit to stand before Him? how many of those blessed ones for whom judgment would mean reward everlasting? Would He find twenty, do you think, or ten, or five? Alas, my fellow-sinners, would He find one?'

He lifted his arms aloft at this solemn question, looking up as if he verily saw that appalling day—the great white throne—the company of angels—the throng of saints and martyrs—the Divine Judge Himself—in their dazzling glory.

'Oh, come not yet, Awful Judge!' he cried; 'we are not ready. Leave us a little more time to wrestle with Satan—to repent our iniquities—to loosen the bondage of this earthly tabernacle, before we stand naked at Thy throne. Who among all these is prepared to meet Thy summons? Who does not tremble as I do at the thought of Thine anger?'

'Ay, tremble, sinner; quail before the God you have blasphemed!' cried a resonant voice at the end of the chapel. 'Tremble, hypocrite, for the sins of these whom you pretend to teach are white as snow beside the blackness of your guilt.'

There was a sudden commotion in the crowded chapel; everyone turned towards the door at the end of the building, from which direction the voice came.

Naomi's heart sank with an appalling dread. Too well she knew that voice, though she had never before heard it raised in those tones of withering denunciation.

'A worthy teacher!' cried Arnold Pentreath, facing the excited congregation, who were all standing up in their pews and staring at him, as he stood conspicuous among the crowd at the door; 'a

teacher to call sinners to repentance—a fit exponent of gospel truth—a man whose soul is steeped in hypocrisy, whose hands are stained with blood.'

There rose a chorus of exclamations; and then one of the staunchest of Joshua's followers, a brawny farmer, opened the door of his pew and pushed his way out into the narrow aisle.

'Now, look'ee yere, Cap'n Pentreath,' he said, 'I ain't goin' to stand by and yere Muster Haggard abused. You'll just hold your tongue—and if you're gone mazed you'll take your madness out o' this yere chapel.'

On this there rose a general cry of reprobation at the Captain's unseemly conduct, Joshua Haggard standing up in his pulpit all the while, looking down at his bewildered flock; firm as a rock, but pale to the lips.

'Come out, come out all of you, and see the witness I bring against him. You think I accuse him without grounds for my accusation. I have my evidence close by—damning evidence. Let him confront it if he can. Do you know that this man—your teacher and guide—is a murderer, a secret assassin?'

'It's a lie!' roared the man who had last spoken; 'it's a lie, and I'd ram your lying words down your throat if I could get at 'ee!'

'It's the truth and he knows it. Look at him. He doesn't deny it, you see. Look at your teacher—he is dumb. His eloquence fails him for the first time in his life. He does not fear to insult his God by his lying oracles, but he shrinks from the face of the man he has injured. Come out, Joshua Haggard, and meet your accuser. He is at the door. He is waiting—oh, so patiently!—till you come and look him in the face.'

Naomi could just distinguish the sailor's white face in the dim light. He stood above the crowd, raised on the step of the door—the entrance of Little Bethel being somewhat higher than the chapel itself.

All was over, then. The worst an avenging God could bring to pass had come. Her father was known to others as that which she had in so many an hour of agony suspected him to be. He was known as a murderer. By some means or other the secret had been made known. God's ways are wonderful and mysterious. She had always thought that it would be so. Her lost lover's blood cried aloud for vengeance, and the Great Avenger had heard the cry.

At last Joshua spoke, and that firm, full voice in which he had so often swayed and moved his flock silenced all ejaculations. Every eye was now turned towards the preacher, and all waited his indignant denial of the charge brought against him.

'I am accused of murder,' said Joshua, calmly and deliberately, 'and we are told the witness of my crime is at the door. Let us go forth and meet him. Those who know me best here know whether God ever meant me to be the shedder of my brother's blood. He maketh one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. My portion hitherto has been honour, and you who know me can say whether I have been deserving of any other lot.'

'There is not a better man in the country,' cried the farmer who had first taken upon himself to be Joshua's champion.

'Nor a more pious—nor a more charitable,' clamoured many voices.

'God, who knows all things,' cried Joshua, lifting up his voice with a sudden burst of passion, 'knows that whatever I have taught in this tabernacle of His I have taught from my heart of hearts. I have travailed for this people. I have loved them and striven for them. I have not cheated them with pleasant words, though my heart yearned towards them. Where others have chastised with whips, I have chastised with scorpions: but I have preached the gospel with a single mind. I have had no thought save to teach and to save. O Lord, if I have been the vilest of sinners, at least in this Thy house I have been a true and faithful servant!'

'Ay, and so ye have, Muster Haggard,' chimed in a chorus of women.

'And now let me go forth to meet my accuser,' said Joshua, opening the door of his pulpit and coming slowly down the stair.

Naomi had come out into the aisle. She threw herself in his way as he passed, and linked her arm through his; and thus linked they came along the narrow space together, the congregation falling back a little to let them pass.

Joshua did not repulse his daughter. He suffered her to hold his arm, seeming scarcely conscious of the contact. His dark, deep-set eyes looked straight before him under bent brows. His firm lips were closely set. He looked a man who was ready to confront Satan himself in bodily form.

'Come,' cried Arnold, beside himself with suppressed passion, 'your accuser is not loud or clamorous. He will wait quietly till you go to him. It is I that am impatient to set you face to face.'

Joshua and his daughter were at the door by this time. They came close to Arnold. Naomi almost touched him as the crowd swayed against her. She looked at him with an expression which he never forgot.

'Oh, Arnold, what have you done!' she said piteously, in a low voice.

'My duty to my brother.'

They were outside the chapel in the next moment, in the clear summer evening. The stars were shining in the pale grey; the great green hills stood up against the cool night sky. All wore its accustomed look of rustic peace. And just in front of the chapel door four men were standing with a litter, on which there lay a quiet figure covered with tarpaulin.

'Come and look at my witness,' said Arnold, seizing Joshua by the arm and dragging him towards the litter, and bending over it to lift the edge of the covering which shrouded that motionless form.

'Stop!' cried Joshua, with a shuddering movement, 'you need not lift it. I can guess. It is death you would have me look on.'

'Yes, death: the body of the man you murdered; my dead brother, whom you slandered in his unhallowed grave, telling me that he had died the death of the suicide. Hark ye, neighbours,' cried Arnold, turning to the awe-stricken crowd; 'it is my brother—Oswald Pentreath—who lies here, shot through the heart by yonder villain nearly a year ago. God only knows if there is evidence enough to bring him to the gallows—but God knows, and I know, that he did the deed. Before you all I accuse him—your preacher, your pastor, your example of righteousness—he is my brother's murderer. The corpse lies here, silent witness of the crime. He—your preacher yonder—was seen waiting for my brother close to the spot where that corpse was found—shots were heard by the witness who saw him—and my brother was never seen after those shots were fired—never seen; he was lying at the bottom of the old shaft, murdered, and flung there to rot forgotten and unknown. And the murderer looked me in the face, and told me my brother was a coward and had slain himself. If earthly justice cannot touch him—if human ingenuity cannot bring this crime home to his door, may God's justice punish him as never man was punished by mortal avenger! May heaven make his lot more bitter than the hardest doom man's inhumanity ever devised for his fellow-man's torture!'

'Take your corpse to the dead-house,' cried Joshua, with a contemptuous calmness, as if those passionate threats of Arnold's passed him by like the wind, 'and make your complaint to the coroner. It is his business to find out the cause of your brother's death. All here know that I saved Oswald Pentreath's life at the peril of my own. That is my answer to your charge.'

'Ay, that we do,' cried ever so many voices, and the crowd turned angrily upon Joshua's accuser. 'We all remember how he saved the young Squire that stormy day—four year ago—risked his life as if it weren't worth a groat, and brought him in alive off

the rock when ne'er another would ha' done it. Doant 'ee be afraid, Muster Haggard. Let un try to lay a finger on 'ee.'

'Come home, father, come home,' whispered Naomi, white as death, and trembling so that she could hardly stand, yet with firmness to make her careful for the father who had always been first in her love and reverence—who was first to-night even, when her lover's corpse lay there before her under its dark pall; awful—unsightly—a thing to be thought of with horror.

She held her father by the arm and led him away from that dreadful spot, scarcely able to walk herself, and yet supporting and sustaining him. The crowd followed as if to protect their minister—followed and congregated round the garden rails as Joshua went into his house; and Arnold was left alone with his dead, and the little group of farm-labourers who had helped him in his hideous discovery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN OPEN VERDICT.

THE claims of the business had kept Judith Haggard away from the prayer-meeting at Little Bethel. She now came out to the door, surprised and alarmed by the appearance of the eager assembly at her brother's heels—still more alarmed by Naomi's pallid face, as the girl led her father into the dimly-lighted passage.

'Why, what in mercy's name is the matter, girl?' cried Judith; 'has your father had a stroke that you hold him like that, as if he couldn't stand without your help—and what brings all the town after him?'

Joshua's fixed eyes and rigid countenance—awfully calm, with a blankness of expression which was like death itself—might have justified the idea that he had lately been struck down by some mortal illness, and was but just emerged from a state of helpless unconsciousness.

'No, Judith,' he answered, with something of his old firmness; 'the visitation is not such as you think, and yet the hand of God is heavy upon me. A calamity has befallen me which you could never have foreseen, bringing shame upon my name and race, making all the days that I have lived here in honour of no avail. Arnold Pentreath has found his brother's body, and accuses me of being his murderer.'

'You!' shrieked Judith, 'you a murderer!—you murder the young Squire, when you were all but drowned in the work of saving his worthless life! If Arnold Pentreath can bring that charge against you, he is a worse man than I should have thought him,

knowing the badness of his blood as I do, and expecting as little as I do from any of his worthless race.'

'He has so accused me.'

'But why? On what grounds? Why suppose that his brother was murdered?'

'His body has been found—in the old shaft.'

'His body has been found—but that doesn't prove that he was murdered. He may have fallen into the shaft.'

'Spare us your arguments to-night,' said Joshua, with a weary air. 'We shall know more to-morrow. I am tired and sick at heart, and want rest. I am in God's hands, and He will deal with me as seemeth best to Him. Yes, in the hands of God—not in the hands of men.'

He left them without another word, and went slowly upstairs to his own room. The crowd had withdrawn quietly by this time, some hastening back to the spot where they had left Arnold and his ghastly burden—others dropping in at the 'First and Last' to discuss the event that had convulsed their peaceful settlement. All were of one mind about Joshua Haggard, and agreed that the accusation brought against him was as wild and foolish as it was infamous.

'I allus said it 'ud be so,' growled old Jabez Long, the fisherman, from his favourite seat in the chimney-corner, where he hung over the smouldering logs even at Midsummer. 'I allus said harm 'ud come of pullin' yon 'puir chap out o' the say. There's never no good comes o' savin' a drownin' man. Chuck un back into the water. That's wisdom—t'other's foolishness. Why, ye see this yere chap can't bide quiet in his grave till he's done Joshua Haggard a hinjury. He rises up agen his deliverer like the on-clane sperrits that come out o' the tombs.'

There was an inquest held next day in the long low-ceiled justice-room at the 'First and Last.' The body of Oswald Pentreath lay at the Grange, and there awaited the visitation of coroner and jury. It lay in the long white drawing-room—that stately saloon which in its air of disuse and solitude had always had something of the look of death. Here to-day lay the master of the house—in the dress he had worn when he left it—a ghastly form, only recognisable by the garments that clothed it, and the colour of the soft golden-brown hair. A pocket-book, stuffed with bank-notes, and the old Squire's watch and seals, had been found upon the body, a proof that the assassin's motive had not been plunder.

Brief was the visitation of the jury to that awful chamber. They had heard the evidence of Arnold Pentreath and the farm

labourers who had assisted in the finding of the body. The search had been long and careful. Guided by the statements of Farmer Weston's cowboy, Arnold had gone straight to the old shaft. He had first searched the ground near the pit, and a few yards from the engine-house, under a furze-bush, he had found one of his brother's pistols discharged. The second pistol had been nowhere forthcoming. Then by means of ropes and ladders, and with due precautions against the effect of noxious gases in the disused mine, Arnold and two of the men had gone down the shaft. Their quest was soon ended. Oswald Pentreath lay at the bottom of the shaft with a bullet through his heart. To bring the body out of the mine was a labour of no small difficulty; but time, the men's sturdy willingness to help, and Arnold's inexhaustible energy, conquered all obstacles, and by the time the earliest star was shining in the calm evening sky, Captain Pentreath was alone in the engine-house keeping guard over his unburied dead while the men went to the farmhouse to fetch a litter on which to carry the corpse to the Grange.

That dismal walk through wood and lane had taken a long time. The church clock was striking ten as the procession entered the straggling village street. The windows of Little Bethel shone dimly, and Joshua's voice was raised in vehement exhortation.

It was the sound of that voice—the impulse of a moment—which led Arnold to enter the chapel, and denounce the man of whose guilt he had no shadow of doubt.

Old Nicholas, the butler, had been one of the witnesses called to identify the body of his late master. He remembered the clothes Oswald Pentreath wore that last day—and he had helped him to put on that coat—and he could swear to the pistol that had been found under the furze bush. He insisted upon telling the whole story of his master's departure, and his own fears and wonderment when the trunks were brought back from Exeter. The Combhollow coroner was a patient gentleman, accustomed to a long-tongued race, and listened quietly to the butler's statement. Here was a mystery to be unravelled, and there was no knowing whence the first gleam of light might come.

But when Arnold's evidence took the form of an accusation against Joshua Haggard, the coroner stopped him peremptorily.

'I cannot listen to any such speculations, Mr. Pentreath, to the discredit of a man in Mr. Haggard's position.'

'They are no speculations,' answered Arnold hotly. 'They are convictions. Hear what the next witness has to say, and then you will see what reason I have for accusing Joshua Haggard of my brother's murder—though you can never know all the ground I

have for certainty—the looks, the words by which that assassin has betrayed his guilt. Why, I ought to have known it the first time he talked to me of my brother. It was clear enough if I had had eyes to see, or a mind to understand.'

The coroner protested against the irrelevance of such assertions, and then Timothy the cowboy was called, and told over again the story of that August afternoon on which he had seen Joshua Haggard go up to Matherly Common.

That picture of the man standing by the door of the engine-house as if watching for some one impressed and puzzled the jury, but it could not shake them in their conviction that Joshua Haggard was a good man—a man who had taught and reproved them for many years, and who had always dealt honourably with them in temporal matters—a man whose weights were true as the sundial on the church tower, and whose goods were of the best quality. That such a man could commit a base and cowardly crime savoured of impossibility. Witchcraft alone could account for such a monstrous thing.

'He couldn't ha' done it unless he wur bewitched,' said one of the deliberants when the jury took counsel together.

'Who knows if that young wife of his didn't bewitch him,' argued another. 'There's many as marked a change in him from the time she came among us. His thoughts seemed to be roving like, half his time; and he stared at you, skeared like, if you spoke to him sudden, and he got careless about his business. You never found him behind his counter.'

'Joshua Haggard is not the man to hurt a wurrum,' said a third jurymen. 'He used to come and sit beside my puir old missus when she was down with her last illness, and read to her by the hour together, and she looked up to him as if he'd been a saint. I'll agree to no verdick that throws any blame on Muster Haggard.'

'Who wants to bring a verdick agen Muster Haggard? But we mun come to some sort o' verdick, maunt we?'

'Make it accidental death, can't 'ee?'

'But he couldn't a got throwd down the shaft by accident.'

'He might have fell in, mightn't he?'

'Ah, but who was it shot him?'

'He might ha' shot hisself fust, and just had strength enough left to throw hisself down th' old shaft.'

The discussion waxed warm after this, but the jurymen were finally agreed that Oswald Pentreath had been murdered by some person or persons unknown.

Arnold went to the coroner directly the inquest was over, and asked for a warrant to arrest Joshua Haggard.

'My dear sir, it is quite out of the question. There is no evidence upon which I can issue a warrant.'

'Not the fact that the man was seen there, hiding in the engine-house, waiting for my unhappy brother. Is that no evidence?' cried Arnold indignantly.

'There is no evidence that he was hiding—there is no evidence that he was waiting for your brother. The mere fact of his being seen at that place a short time before the firing of the shots amounts to nothing, even if we could be sure those shots the cowboy heard were the shots that killed your poor brother. Joshua Haggard is a mystic, a fanatic, a man who spends half his life wandering in solitary places. I have often met him on the hills and commons. There is nothing strange in the fact of his being seen up yonder that day. Then, again, there is an absence of all motive.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Arnold eagerly. 'There was a motive, and a strong one; but there are reasons why I could not speak of this motive just now in open court. It involves error—though not actual guilt on my brother's part.'

He told the coroner the story of Oswald's attachment to Mrs. Haggard, and the meeting between them that afternoon.

'We have no evidence that Mr. Haggard knew of that meeting,' said Mr. Penruddock, who was much disinclined to make himself odious to all chapel-going people by an unwise arrest of Joshua Haggard.

'We have the evidence of his presence at that spot—at that hour.'

Arnold argued the matter, but in vain, and left Mr. Penruddock, of Wrinkles Close, with the idea that a rustic coroner was the most inept and useless of officials.

Once more Naomi heard the old church bell tolling dismally in the afternoon sunlight. Again she saw the funeral train wind slowly round the curve of the hill, the same wind-tossed plumes—for even in this June weather the breeze blew fresh from the western sea—the same solemn figures and black horses, and poor pomps and vanities of earthly pride; and this time she turned from the shrouded window with the heart-sickness of despair, and cast herself upon the ground, and tried to shut out the light of day, and prayed for death as the one issue and release from her miseries.

They were carrying him to his father's grave—her murdered lover—slain by her father's cruel hand, and slain at her prompting.

Had she never put that fatal letter in her father's hand, this thing would never have been. Oswald would have gone his way in peace, to a new world, and repentance, perchance, and quiet days, and Joshua Haggard would have known nothing of that stolen farewell.

'Half the guilt is mine,' she cried. 'Let me bear all the punishment. God be merciful to my misguided father, maddened by jealousy and wounded love. O God, charge not against him his sin that day.'

She had not been alone with her father since that night in the chapel. They had sat at the same board, and she had looked in his face, which told no story of fear or agitation. He had gone about his business with quiet regularity; taught in his school, visited his sick, read and exhorted as of old—yes, even while the inquest was being held at the 'First and Last,' and all his flock were in a state of wildest emotion on their pastor's behalf. There had been a crowd of Joshua's people about the door of the justice-room, a crowd that gave vent to its indignation in a half-smothered way as Arnold Pentreath went in and out of the court. The feeling that their pastor was being persecuted for his faith was strong among them. This accusation of Arnold's was too wild to be believed even by the accuser. It was a lying invention of Satan, designed to put this faithful flock to shame. This feeling pervaded the village, and wherever the minister went he received some new proof of his popularity. Women ran out of their cottage-doors as he passed by, and clasped him by the hand, and offered him their sympathy in this great trial. He shrank somewhat from these demonstrations of feeling. 'Let me bear my own burden,' he said. 'It is not too heavy for me.'

And then when he was alone he clasped his hands in prayer and cried, 'O Lord, reward these people for their affection and their trustfulness, for I can only bring shame upon them. I have built up a temple to Thine honour, and pulled it down, and abased and ruined Thy holy place with mine own hands. I have given Thee half my heart, and sold the other half to the devil. Let these people whom I have loved and taught suffer no loss because of my iniquity. Let their faith endure steadfast to the end, though my life prove a lie.'

Never had there been such a funeral as that of the young squire of Pentreath Grange. The old churchyard was filled with all the inhabitants of Combhollow, and a crowd of strangers from outlying hamlets among the hills and tiny fishing villages along the rocky coast. This God's acre lay on the side of a hill, and was a place of ups and downs, beautified by many a fuschia-shaded tomb, and by

myrtles that had grown into trees—a sheltered and pleasant spot, hidden from the sight of the sea, but not so remote that the murmur of the waves might not serve as a lullaby for quiet sleepers under the ferny turf.

Arnold Pentreath stood by the open vault, pale and haggard, and with a countenance which grief had made rigid as marble. He was quite alone in his place by the coffin—chief and only mourner. There was some sympathy felt with him, yet less than would have been given but for that accusation brought against Joshua Haggard. This the Little Bethelites could not pardon. False and monstrous as the charge was, it had inflicted disgrace upon their sect. It was a fact that would be remembered and recorded against them in days to come—a dark tradition to be magnified and distorted by their enemies.

That last ceremonial completed—and oh, how brief and hasty a business it seems to the mourner who feels that this is the last!—the coffin placed in its stony niche, for worms to invade and toads to squat upon, and damp and mildew to disfigure—a place of decay and loathsomeness for evermore—Arnold walked slowly away from the churchyard, sick at heart, loathing the faces of his fellow-men. He would not go back to the lych-gate where the coach was waiting for him—would not be shut up again in the Barnstaple undertaker's musty chariot, to hide his grief behind a cambric handkerchief, and so be conveyed slowly along the straggling village street, the principal feature and object of interest for the assembled multitude. He left the churchyard by another gate that led up to the hills—the wild lonely hills, where he could hug his sorrow, and be alone with his baffled vengeance and his passionate grief.

That was the sting—to know his brother's murderer, to have no shadow of doubt as to the assassin, and to be powerless to strike. Conscience had its scorpions, no doubt, and heaven held in reserve its lash for the hypocrite and murderer; but this was not enough for the brother who had loved his brother. Human nature in its weakness and narrowness of vision yearned for personal vengeance. Arnold wanted to bring this man to the gallows—to be the instrument of his direct and immediate punishment. Nothing less could satisfy his wounded love. His brother's ashes cried to him for vengeance.

One consideration only came between him and this hunger for swift revenge. He remembered that appealing look of Naomi's. His Naomi—his most noble among women—the woman he had hoped to win in days to come—the woman he had pictured in the fair future sitting at his board, ruling his household, making life sweet and honourable for him.

Could he ever hope to win her now? In his own mind he dissociated her altogether from her father's guilt. She was no less pure in his eyes because her father's hands were stained with blood. He was, even in his direst anger, willing to believe that Joshua's crime had been an act of jealous madness, and not the deliberate guilt of a criminal nature.

He could understand now why Naomi had forbidden him to hope, while her looks and tones told him he was dear to her. She had known or suspected her father's guilt. This would account for that deep melancholy which no hopeful utterances of his could dispel.

And if he brought Joshua Haggard to the gallows? What then? Was it not to destroy utterly the woman he so revered, the woman he fondly loved? Could Naomi survive so deep a shame, so deadly an agony; or, surviving it, could she have any feeling but hatred for the man who had brought shame and suffering upon her? He remembered that agonised appeal in the chapel—

‘Arnold, what are you doing!’

And he had answered her coldly; though that answer meant the destruction of those new hopes which had been so dear to him. He knew her well enough to be very sure that she would cling to her father till death; stand beside him on the gallows, were it possible, and be true to him after death. To hunt Joshua to his doom as he meant to hunt him must be to lose Naomi for ever.

‘Be it so,’ he cried. ‘What is my happiness, or her peace, that I should put it in the balance with my brother's blood? I have one duty to perform; clear—direct—inexorable. Let me do that, and then go back to the old rough life at sea, and forget that I ever dreamt of being happy on shore.’

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JOSHUA STOPS HIS WATCH.

LITTLE BETHEL was crammed to suffocation on the Sunday that followed the burial of Oswald Pentreath. Not only had the flock assembled in fullest force to hear their pastor improve the occasion, and enlarge upon the evil that had been wrought against him by the Philistine, but many who were not of Joshua's sect had been drawn to his tabernacle by curiosity. They wanted to see how the man would bear himself under circumstances so trying to manly fortitude.

The flock were not disappointed in the demeanour of their minister. Never had Joshua conducted his simple service with

greater dignity. His prayers, those eloquent extemporary supplications modelled upon the theology of William Law, yet with something of Jeremy Taylor's florid warmth in their colouring, carried his congregation along with him like rushing waters down which a fleet of frail boats are driven tumultuously, knowing not whither they drift. It was by his eloquence in prayer chiefly that Joshua had established his power over his flock. He elevated their souls by his own enthusiasm, they felt themselves raised to a spiritual height which of themselves alone they could never have attained. They heard their cares and sorrows, their petty doubts and difficulties, their failures and shortcomings and evil acts laid at the foot of the Great Throne, with such appeals for pardon and pity as their dull minds could never frame, their uneloquent lips never utter. Joshua took them up in his arms, as it were, and held them at the feet of their Saviour, and called down the eternal mercy for them. He used the Scriptures for their benefit, as a skilful barrister uses precedents for the extrication of his clients. He found bounteous promises that they had never dreamed of in those familiar words of holy writ, covenants and pledges of grace and mercy. He held a golden key, with which he opened the treasury of Heaven, and brought forth promises and favours for his people.

To-day his prayers took a tone of deepest self-humiliation. He laid himself prostrate before offended Heaven, and there was none of the exultant pride which the flock expected to discover in his supplications, no thanksgiving for an unsullied conscience and a soul clear of offence, for rectitude which could laugh to scorn the revilings of the evil-minded. It was the publican and not the Pharisee who stood up to pray in that rural temple.

The hymn he chose was of a gloomy cast—but all his ministrations had of late been of a gloomy character. When he went up into the pulpit, and looked round at the upturned faces, and slowly opened his Bible, there was a hush of expectancy. It was thought that his text would have some bearing on the strange event of the past week, and that in his sermon he would take occasion publicly to declare the falsehood and iniquity of the charge that had been brought against him.

But when he had given out the text, with his usual deliberate distinctness, there was a general sense of disappointment—the verses he had chosen seemed to have so little bearing on the subject which filled the public mind.

‘In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity.’ Only Naomi understood the

meaning of those words of assurance. For each the burden of his own sin; the assassin's innocent children were to have no portion in the shame and agony of his guilt. Upon this text Joshua Haggard enlarged with more than his accustomed power. Very awful was the picture which he painted of the sinner's earthly doom, the slow agonies of conscience, the shameful shrinking from the face of his fellow-men, the caresses of his children stinging him like the sting of serpents, the reverence and obedience of his household a mockery and a reproach—the light of day intolerable, the sun a burden, the quiet night accursed. And when from this picture of the sinner's suffering on earth he turned to the contemplation of his punishment hereafter, the vision assumed a darker and more terrible aspect. Before the titanic tortures of that land of shadows, earth's puny torments shrank to the sting of buzzing summer flies as measured against the venom of the cobra or the rattle-snake. Joshua conjured up those visions of horror with a strange uncanny power, as if the fiend had lifted the corner of hell's curtain, and showed him the fiery gulf behind. He dwelt on these terrors with a gloomy relish, and spoke of hell and doom with a familiar knowledge, as if he had steeped his soul in the fires of Pandemonium.

‘But for the sinner's children,’ he cried at last, withdrawing his mind, as by an effort, from this contemplation of the nethermost pit, ‘they shall go free; Heaven will not lay upon them the burden of a father's sin. He shall perish, he shall go to his doom, but they shall remain scatheless. On earth, perchance, their portion may be shame and suffering, for earth's judgments are lying judgments; but God is righteous, and will keep this promise, and will adjust the balance.’

Coming out of chapel, amidst the crowd, Naomi found herself close to a stranger who was talking of her father.

‘I can believe anything of this man now I've heard him preach,’ he said.

‘Why?’ enquired his companion.

‘Because I am very sure he is a madman.’

‘I don't see that,’ said the other, startled by the assertion.

‘His sermon was violent and gloomy, but sane enough.’

‘No sane man ever preached as that man preaches, and you may take my word for it——’

Here the crowd parted Naomi from the speaker, but what she had heard impressed her deeply. It was hardly a new thought which was thus abruptly presented to her. The change in her father had inspired her with fears to which she had hardly dared to give their

actual form. Who was to discriminate between perpetual gloom—moody silence—an unbroken reserve, and the tokens and indications of a mind distraught? That her father's whole character had undergone an alteration since the day of Oswald Pentreath's disappearance she well knew. Was it not possible that, on that day, the clear light of reason was darkened for ever? From that fatal hour he had broken loose from all old ties—from children and wife, and friends' and business—he had been like an owl of the desert, a pelican in the wilderness.

But even with the horror of the thought there came a blessed sense of relief. If reason had left him in the hour of temptation, if the light was quenched before he did that fatal deed, her father was not accountable for his sin. It was not with his whole mind that he had broken the Divine Law. The clouded brain had not taken the measure of the act.

This offered a way out of her deepest sorrow. Dreadful as earthly penalties might be—shameful, intolerable, revolting—it was Heaven's anger she most dreaded for the father she so devotedly loved. Sure of God's pardon and pity for the sinner, she could with only earthly sorrow, with only sense of earthly suffering and loss, see him perish on the scaffold; secure of a fair hereafter, a glorious meeting in a land of rest and peacefulness, where the red robes of repentant sinners were to be washed whiter than snow.

Awful then as this thought of mental alienation was, there was comfort in it. She could cling closer to her afflicted father, pitying and pardoning him; full of remorse for her own share in his suffering, ascribing to herself half his guilt.

'If I had but spared him the knowledge of that letter, Heaven might have spared me this anguish,' she thought.

Joshua was absent from the family board at the two o'clock Sunday dinner, an uninteresting repast of cold provisions, which James Haggard regarded as one of the privations and trials of his career. Other people in Combhollow rioted in hot joints and savoury potatoes reeking with unctuous grease and gravy, followed by huge fruit pie or pasty, and perchance a bowl of cream.

'I don't call it honouring the Sabbath to sit down to a worse dinner than on a work-a-day,' Jim remarked argumentatively. 'And all that Sally may sit in a corner of our pew and breathe hard all through the sermon.'

'Eat your dinner and be thankful,' said Aunt Judith severely, 'or leave it and hold your tongue. I wonder you can be so base-minded as to think of your meals at such a time, with such affliction come upon your house as we've had to bear.'

'Do you mean Captain Pentreath bringing that charge against

father?' asked Jim contemptuously. 'I'm not such a fool as to fret about that. Any lunatic might accuse us of murder, or arson, or high treason, or gunpowder plot. Poor Pentreath's head's been turned by finding his brother at the bottom of Mat-cherly mine. I was over at the 'First and Last' when the inquest was going on, and heard everybody saying that it was worse than madness to lay such a crime at father's door. There's not a man in Combhollow would believe a word against father.'

'It would be hard if they would,' retorted Judith, 'after the life your father has lived among 'em all these years, and no one able to bring a reproach against him, unless it was for foolishness in marrying a silly girl for the sake of her pretty face.'

'I never saw any silliness in Cynthia,' said Jim; 'and for my part I wish she was home again. I miss her pretty face, though it was sad enough for the last twelve months, goodness knows. I don't think we any of us made her too happy.'

'She's a deal better away,' replied Judith, with a sour look. 'She turned your father's thoughts from his duties, and never brought anything but trouble into this house. Let her stop with friends of her own station, if she has any.'

'Ain't it rather like turning her out of doors to let her stop away so long?' asked Jim.

'I didn't know it was a son's place to find fault with his father's doings,' said Judith. 'Your father's the best judge of his duty to his wife, I should hope. It isn't for us to interfere. He didn't ask our leave when he brought her home, and it's not likely he'd want our leave to send her away.'

'It's a pity things couldn't go smoother, anyhow,' pursued Jim, persistently; 'for she's a pretty little thing, and a good little thing, that would never do harm to anyone.'

'That's all *you* know, Mr. Clever. Perhaps you'll be kind enough to keep your opinion till you're asked for it. Why don't you eat your dinner, Naomi?' enquired Miss Haggard sharply. 'It's as good a bit of beef as ever was cooked, and I suppose *you're* not too dainty to eat cold meat on the Sabbath?'

'I'm not hungry, aunt,' said Naomi.

She had been sitting with her plate before her, making no attempt to eat, hearing her aunt and brother talking, but in no-wise understanding them. Her thoughts were with her father in his lonely room. He had pleaded a headache, and gone quietly up to his bedchamber when he came in from chapel. How was he bearing his burden? Without consolation, without sympathy. Yes, verily without human sympathy—but for this believer, even in his depth of guilty despair, there still remained

a pitying ear that would listen to his groaning, and take account of his anguish. The Friend of Sinners would not be deaf to his cry.

‘I think I’ll go upstairs and see how father is, and if he wants anything,’ said Naomi, rising from her seat at the table.

‘If I was you, I wouldn’t go bothering and disturbing him,’ said Judith with her accustomed tartness; ‘but of course you can do as you like about it.’

This was an indirect order not to go, but for once in her life Naomi disobeyed, and went straight to Joshua’s room.

She knocked, but there was no answer, and she went in quietly, hoping to find her father asleep.

He was sitting in front of the open *escritoire*, his arms folded, his eyes bent upon the ground. He did not stir, or look up at his daughter’s entrance, nor even when she came close to him and laid her hand gently on his shoulder.

She stood for a few moments in silence, waiting for him to take some notice of her; but he sat like a statue, and never lifted his eyes from the ground.

‘Dear father,’ she began in a low and tender voice, as she would have spoken to him had he been lying ill, at death’s door, ‘I was obliged to come to you. I could not bear to think of you alone, and unhappy. Dearest, it is a heavy affliction that has fallen upon us, but not heavier than we can bear. Father,’ sinking on her knees beside his chair, and putting her arms round him, ‘if your guilt is deep, I am guilty too. I sinned grievously when I gave you his letter. I suffered my evil passions to get the better of me. My heart was full of hatred and rancour. Let us repent, and seek for mercy together. We both have sinned.’

‘The letter,’ muttered Joshua, with a bitter laugh,—‘the letter was not so much. I saw him hold her in his arms and kiss her—saw her yield herself up to a love that was stronger than honour, or duty, or her love of God—saw her folded to his heart under Heaven’s all-seeing eye.’

‘It was my fault, father. But for that letter you would never have known of that last meeting. It was but a stolen farewell, and they both meant to do their duty. They were so young, and had erred for want of thought.’

‘They were thoughtful enough to plan secret meetings—thoughtful enough to deceive me. And I believed her purest among women—free from all taint of sin. Do not speak of her—or of him. They sinned, and have reaped the fruit of sin. “The wages of sin is death.”’

‘Father, we have sinned grievously, you and I; and we can



'DEAREST, IT IS A HEAVY AFFLICTION.'

have no hope of mercy unless we repent,' said Naomi, horrified at Joshua's hardness of tone, which implied an unconsciousness of the weight and measure of his crime.

'My life has been one long atonement. I have laboured always in the work of salvation.'

'But by one sinful act all might be undone—in one dark hour the labour of a lifetime might be lost,' urged Naomi.

Her father made no answer.

'Dearest, will you not kneel and pray with me?' she pleaded. 'Will you not help me to lift this burden from my soul? I am weary with the weight of my sin. I loved him, and yet betrayed him to you. Oh, it was the act of a Judas! *He* must have loved his Master. It was jealousy that made him a traitor. Father, if you cannot be sorry for your sin, be sorry for mine.'

In vain; the brooding eyes were never lifted from the ground. Naomi looked up into the rigid face. Yes, there was an expression there as of light quenched, at least a temporary aberration. He was not listening, he was not following her.

He sat for some time thus, Naomi still kneeling by him and watching him, but in silence. Then he stretched out his hand to the open Bible that lay upon his desk, and began to read.

'Leave me, my dear,' he said; 'I am better alone.'

'I would so much rather stay with you, dear father. I will not disturb you.'

'Go, dear; I wish to be alone. I have to command my thoughts. It will be time for chapel presently.'

'I will go, then, dear father. But while we are alone, let me say one thing.'

'I am listening.'

She put her arms round his neck, and rested her head on his shoulder.

'You know how I loved Oswald, father, to the last, even after his heart had gone away from me. But I told you then, as I tell you now, you were always first and dearest, always the object of my highest reverence and love. That could never change in me. No act of yours could lessen my love, no affliction Heaven could bring upon you could lower you in my esteem. Remember that always, father. Come what may, I am your loving daughter to the end.'

With this assurance she left him, a little more at peace with herself for having thus spoken.

The afternoon service was gone through very quietly. Joshua had a subdued and wearied air, as if worn out by the effort of the morning. The congregation were less alert and exalted in their

piety, as was natural in people who had dined heavily, and given way to fleshly snares in the shape of too-substantial pastry. Even the hymns had a slumberous tone, and acted as lullabies upon some elder members of the flock whose feeble knees were an excuse for a sitting posture.

After service Joshua taught for half-an-hour in his school, and said a few earnest words to the young men of his adult night school, a class in which he had taken a special interest. They were very touching words, and well remembered afterwards.

Joshua was absent from the tea-table as he had been from the dinner-table. His headache was worse, he told his sister, and he was going to lie down. Naomi had an evening Scripture class to attend to after tea, a task that would occupy her for about an hour. She went to this duty at half-past six o'clock, while Judith enjoyed the one Sabbath luxury which she permitted herself, a half-hour's nap in the chintz-covered arm-chair by the best parlour window, screened by the graceful droop of the well-starched curtain from the gaze of passing pedestrians, going by at the rate of one in ten minutes.

Joshua was alone, sitting by the *escritoire*, as he had sat when Naomi went to him in the afternoon. He had locked the door, determined to be free from all intrusion—free even from his daughter's pitying love. He wanted nothing between him and that awful solitude in which he had lived of late—the isolation which a mind unhinged makes for itself.

He sat thus till the twilight thickened and the pages of his open Bible grew dim. Even in the troubled state of his brain—a trouble which had been growing for months—that book was his rock of defence, his sheet anchor. He looked into those pages for justification, for assurance of grace and redemption, and he seldom looked in vain. If he had sinned, had not David sinned also, and yet retained his exalted place in the love of God and men? Was he to humble himself more than David humbled himself? Had David ever ceased to be king, and priest, and teacher, chief and supreme among the people? If *he* had fallen, had not Peter also fallen, and yet received that divine commission which gave him charge of Christ's flock?

'I will preach the gospel and teach men while I have breath,' protested Joshua, laying his hand upon the sacred book. 'What have the burdens on my conscience to do with my teaching? What does it matter that I know myself a sinner if I can expound the Word of God? He has given me a gift, and I will use it—to the uttermost and to the last. If this is to be a hypocrite, my hypocrisy shall go with me to my grave.'

This was his summing-up of his position in one of his calmer moods; but his mind was not always so clear, or his views so fixed and resolute. There were moments to-night, as he sat in the summer dusk, while the shadows grew and deepened in the lonely old-fashioned room, grotesque shadows of familiar things which he had known from childhood—there were intervals in which his brain grew clouded, and past and present were alike dim and distorted. His thoughts flashed far and wide like the erratic gleams of a lantern—now alighting upon some picture of the past, now plunging into the dark gulf of the future. He saw himself as he had been at the outset of his laborious career, eager for self-sacrifice, careless of all worldly loss, sustained by an enthusiast's exaggerated hopes, and an enthusiast's indifference to suffering. He had laboured, and had been plenteously rewarded. He had been a wandering light shining in dark places and forgotten corners of the earth, and had brought many lost sheep home to the fold. Then his father had died, and he had been called back to his native place, to find that, after all, he had lost nothing of earthly gain by his constancy, for, despite the old man's threatenings, he had left all to his only son.

This day of inheritance Joshua felt to have been in some measure a time of temptation and falling away. He had turned aside from the desert and desolate places to dwell in a land of fatness. He had been content to serve a few instead of serving many. He had sat down under his vine and fig-tree, and taught one little flock instead of wandering from village to village seeking those whom the church had forgotten, or cared for with a lukewarm love. True that he had laboured hard for his flock, walked many miles, stretched his cure of souls to its utmost limits, taught the young, brought the light of education both spiritual and secular into many dark places, but he had from this time ceased to be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, a disciple who has given up all things for his Master.

Then came his prosperous first marriage, the birth of his children, new ties that bound him to the old home.

How strange and remote those early years seemed as the fitful light of memory shone upon them!

The picture changed. Those peaceful monotonous days were past. He was standing on the Cornish common in the pure sunshine, the great Atlantic glittering in the distance, the sandy knolls and hollows all ablaze with yellow furze, the subtle scent of that golden blossom in the air—standing on the threshold of a new life. Never after that hour was he to be the same man, independent of all human influence. Henceforth he was to be chained to

humanity by mankind's most pitiful weakness, an unreasoning love for a weak fellow-creature.

'I verily believe I loved her from that first day,' he thought. 'Her image never left me. She was always before me, sitting in the sunlight, with her drooping hair, like pale gold. Can I doubt that Satan set her there for my entanglement and ruin? "His heart shall be heavy for her sake, he shall be so troubled that he shall grow dumb," said the fiend. But I have cheated him of his prey. He has had my heart, and bruised and broken it, but he has not quenched my spirit—he has not silenced me—I have borne my burden and continued to teach and exhort, and will so continue to the end. No snare of the arch-tempter hiding behind a fair face shall destroy me.'

Then followed a moment of relenting.

'She seemed so innocent, so pure. She was so gentle and obedient, and owned so meekly that she had been tempted, and had sinned in hearkening for a little while to the tempter. O God, there could be no vileness in the soul that looked up at me from those gentle eyes. And I thrust her from me with violence and contumely, and sent her back to servitude and dependence!—my wedded wife, the one creature I have loved most on earth!' He clasped his hands, and looked upward in exaltation of mind.

'Surely that was an atonement for my weakness. Surely that was a sacrifice which Heaven must approve. And yet I have known no peace of mind since that day. Heaven has given me no token of approval or forgiveness.'

That intense egotism which is one of the characteristics of a mind off its balance had taken possession of him. He felt himself the centre of the universe. The Bible had been written for him. He stood face to face with his Creator, and felt himself worthy to be saved.

His daughter knocked at the door presently, and asked him if he would not have a light.

'No,' he answered; 'my soul can hold communion with God in the darkness. I am alone, as Elijah was upon the mountain waiting for the voice of the Lord.'

It was after midnight when he laid himself upon his bed, wearied with meditations in which his brain had been hyper-active. Tired as he was with the long day, and its double service, the long evening and its protracted thoughtfulness, he could not easily sleep; and when at last his wearied eyelids closed, his slumber was more like a trance than a sleep.

He saw his wife's face looking up at him as she had looked that last day in the lane, pleadingly, piteously, full of grief and

love. He saw it more vividly than faces are seen in dreams—saw it close to him as he lay upon his pillow, and was dimly conscious of lying there, and the hour of the night, and that this face was looking at him from afar off, though it seemed so near that he could have stretched out his hand and touched it.

Then came a voice that thrilled him :

‘Joshua, Joshua, come to me.’

He was awake and on his feet in an instant. It seemed to him that his waking ears had heard that voice—that it was something more than a part of his dream. He stood listening for some moments, half expecting to hear the cry repeated, and his wife’s hand upon his door.

He went to the door, and opened it, and looked out upon the landing faintly lighted by the stars.

No, the place was empty, the lower part of the house was dark and silent. Nothing had happened. It was only a dream.

‘But it is a dream sent by Heaven,’ he said. ‘I will hearken to it, and go. Yes, my love, I forgive you ; I am coming to you. I bring you pardon and love.’

He struck a light from the old tinder-box, lighted his candle, and began to dress himself hurriedly. He had looked at his watch on first rising, wondering to find so little of the night was gone. It was twenty minutes past one o’clock.

Joshua took his watch from under his pillow, lifted the glass, and laid his finger on the hands and stopped them. Only once before had he ever done this thing, and that occasion was the moment of his conversion, the instant in which the divine assurance of his election and calling had been breathed into his soul. At that blessed moment he had stopped his watch, in order that it might for ever record this turning point in his life. It was the watch he had used as a young man, and it was still in his desk : he had never carried it afterwards, and had endured no small inconvenience for the want of it, till his father’s fine old timekeeper had descended to him as a part of his inheritance.

It was a curious fancy which moved him to do the same thing to-night. He could have given no reason for the impulse, but he obeyed it blindly, and the loud ticking of the watch grew still at twenty minutes past one.

(To be continued.)

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OR, CULTURE, FAITH, AND PHILOSOPHY IN AN ENGLISH
COUNTRY HOUSE.

BOOK III.—CHAPTER IV.

‘By the way,’ said Mr. Saunders, raising his eyebrows, and looking slowly round him, ‘I suppose I may speak the truth freely, as I know well enough that all to whom my vaticinations would be unwelcome are sure to mistake me for a Cassandra.’

‘Mistake him for a what?’ said Lady Ambrose, in a loud undertone.

‘She was a beautiful young unfortunate,’ said Mrs. Sinclair confidentially, ‘who was betrayed by the god Apollo.’

Mr. Saunders was conscious he had raised a smile. He considered it a full license to proceed.

‘Well,’ he went on, ‘all these decaying carcases which taint the wholesome air—by-the-by, I must ask you to forgive me for having used the word *paganism* just now in its only legitimate sense: I meant by it the religion that still lingers on in villages and places cut off from the stream of things—all these decaying carcases, or wounded malevolent dotards—I mean the old wretched faiths that lie dead or dying on the battle-field of the nineteenth century, making, as such things always must do, the first aspect of victory hideous—are being gradually buried quietly away in the good disinfecting earth of complete forgetfulness; and are leaving Science and Humanity, hand in hand, to enjoy the healthy—the holy results of the gigantic struggle. Yes,’ cried Mr. Saunders, getting more and more eloquent as he went on, ‘thanks to science, that faithful servant, that invincible advocate of humanity, in another fifty years there will not be another religion left. Mark my words, and remember that I have said it.’

‘Sir!’

Where did that sudden, solemn, indignant sound come from—that single syllable at which the music of Mr. Saunders’s voice, ‘like a fountain’s sickening pulse, retired in a moment.’ Who had spoken? The sound surprised everybody. It was Mr. Stockton—Mr. Stockton, with a face all aglow with feeling, beneath his picturesque wideawake hat, and holding in his hand a white pocket-handkerchief bordered with pale blue.

'Perhaps,' Mr. Stockton continued, looking slowly round him, 'I as a man of science, who have been a patient apprentice at my work for six-and-twenty years, may be allowed to give some opinion on this matter. Destroy religion! Will science destroy religion? Will it extinguish one profound, one ennobling, one devout feeling? Will it quench one spark of poesy? I speak with confidence, for I speak from my own experience, and I say No. Does it narrow our notions of life's wonder and dignity to peer into the abyss of being, and learn something of the marvellous laws of things—to discover the same mysterious Something in a snow-flake, in the scent of a rose, in some "topmost star of unascended heaven," and in some prayer or aspiration in the soul of man? True it is that this wondrous All is Matter, and that all matter is atoms in its last analysis. No idle metaphysics have clouded my brain, so I have been able to see these things clearly.'

'Yes, yes, yes,' cried Mr. Saunders, recovering himself, his voice tremulous with excitement, 'I know all that. I know that in their last analysis a pig and a martyr, a prayer and a beef-steak, are just the same—atoms and atomic movement. We, the younger generation of thinkers, accept all the premisses you give us without a moment's question. We only reason boldly and honestly on them, and I defy you to prove—Mr. Stockton, sir, if you will only listen to me—'

But there was little chance of that. Interrupted only for a moment, and whilst Mr. Saunders was yet speaking, Mr. Stockton's eloquence swept on.

'But when guided by science,' he said, 'the awe-struck eye of man gazes through "the dark backward and abysm of time," and sees that all that is has unfolded itself, unmoved and unbidden, from a brainless, senseless, lifeless gas—the cosmic vapour as we call it—and that it may, for aught we know, one day return to it—I say, when we realize, when we truly make our own, this stupendous truth, are not our feelings,' said Mr. Stockton, letting his eyes rest on Miss Merton's with an appealing melancholy—'our feelings at such moments religious? Are they not Religion?'

'But,' said Miss Merton, 'there is nothing religious *in* a gas. I don't see how anything religious can come out of it.'

'Perfectly right!' chuckled Mr. Saunders, faintly clapping his hands. 'Nothing can come out of the sack but what's in it. There's no sex in reason. Miss Merton's perfectly right.'

'Ah, Miss Merton,' Mr. Stockton continued, 'don't be frightened by the mere sound of the word *matter*. For who knows what matter is'—('Then, why talk about it?' shrilled Mr. Saunders, unheeded)—'that great Alpha and Omega of the

Universe?' Mr. Stockton went on. 'And don't wrong me by thinking that I "palter with you in a double sense," and that I am not using the word *religion* in its truest, its profoundest signification. Do you think, Miss Merton, for instance, that I cannot feel with you, when, stirred to your inmost soul by some strain of Mozart or Beethoven, you kneel before your sacrificial altar, whilst the acolyte exalts the Host, and murmur with bowed head your litany to your beautiful Virgin? I say advisedly, Miss Merton, that I, as a man of science, can appreciate, and to a great extent share, your adoring—your adorable frame of mind.'

Mr. Stockton paused. Miss Merton experienced a variety of emotions. Some were not far from anger; but chief of all was a certain sense of absurdity, caused not so much by Mr. Stockton's acquaintance with Catholic ritual, as by the fact of finding herself elected, without any merit of her own, as the special object of so great a man's eloquence. It was as much as she could do to help laughing. She compromised with her facial muscles, however, and only gave a smile, which she trusted would pass muster as one of grave enquiry. Mr. Stockton thought that it was so, and went on; but all the while he *felt* that it was not so, and his enthusiasm, he could not tell why, became somewhat more polemical.

'Does science, then,' he proceeded, 'rob us of one iota of religious feeling, or degrade our notions of life's measureless solemnity? Nay, it is rather the flippant conceptions of theology that would do that, by connecting everything with an eternal Personality—a personality so degraded as to have some connection with ourselves. The prayer of the theologian "cabined, cribbed, confined" in spoken words, is directed to a Being that Science can make no room for, and would not want, if she could. The prayer of the man of science, for the most part of the silent sort, is directed, whither?—demands, what? He is silent if you ask him, for his answer would be beyond the reach of words. Even to hint at its nature, he would feel were a profanity.'

'Do you know, Mr. Stockton,' said Miss Merton, this time with a polite meekness, 'all this rather bewilders me.'

'And so it does me,' said Mr. Stockton, much pleased with Miss Merton's manner; 'and this august bewilderment, which gives fulness and tone to our existence, but which we can neither analyse nor comprehend—to me it comes in one shape, to you in another, and is—religion. In the name, then, of all genuine science, and of all serious scientific men, let man keep, I say,' said Mr. Stockton, looking round him, 'this precious and ennobling heritage—let him keep it and shape it ever anew, to meet his ever-changing and deepening needs. In *my* dream of the future, I see

religions not diminished, but multiplied, growing more and more richly diverse, as they sink deeper into individual souls.'

'See,' said Donald Gordon softly, 'here is science on the one side offering us all religions, and on the other none.'

'Heigho!' sighed Mr. Luke, very loud; 'let us agree about *conduct* first, and quarrel about theology afterwards.'

'Precisely,' said Mr. Stockton, to Mr. Luke's extreme annoyance, Mr. Luke being at this moment prepared to differ from Mr. Stockton in all the most important ways that might be possible. 'Mr. Luke is perfectly right.' ('I should like to know how you know that,' thought Mr. Luke.) 'Let us agree about *conduct*—morality, by-the-by, is the plainer word—that is the great thing. Let us agree about the noble and the beautiful. Let us agree heroically to follow truth—ay, truth; let us follow that, I say, picking our way step by step, and not look where we are going. Let us follow—what can I add to this?—the incomparable life of the great Founder of Christianity. Yes, Miss Merton, entertaining the views that I do, I say the incomparable life. I was thinking of insisting upon this just now, when you were talking about culture, as soon as I saw what meaning you were attaching to that word—'

This was literally taking the bread out of Mr. Luke's mouth. It was saying the very thing he had been keeping for the final filling-in of the conception of true culture. And the man who had robbed him thus was a mere Philistine—a mere man of science, who was without even a smattering of Greek or Hebrew, and who thought sensori-motor nerves and spontaneous generation more important subjects than Marcion's Gospel or the Psalms of David. Mr. Stockton, however, had not done yet.

'But,' he added, 'so solemn a thing do I, holding the views I do, consider morality, that I thought religion, and not culture, was *the* thing with which it were most fitly associated.'

In a moment Mr. Luke was equal to the occasion.

'Ah,' he exclaimed, in a voice of gracious melancholy, 'it was my fault—it was my fault. If I had only spoken earlier, Mr. Stockton would have seen our meaning a little more clearly. What was said about culture just now was perfectly right—perfectly right, and really capitally illustrated—as far as it went. The only fault was that the most important point in the matter was quite left out. It is quite true that culture is, as Mr. Laurence said so happily, the sensitising of the mental palate—the making it a good taster. But a taster of what? Not only of social absurdities, or love affairs, or beautiful scenery, but of morality, of righteousness, of Christianity. The really profound work of culture is to make us judges of these—judges able to tell

in an instant real righteousness and real Christianity from pseudo-righteousness and pseudo-Christianity, so that we may swallow the true like the healing water of life, and reject the false like a sample of bad claret. And this being the case,' said Mr. Luke, turning apologetically to Mr. Stockton, 'I fear hardly enough stress was laid just now on wide reading—an intimacy with the really great literature of the world—a knowledge of all the best things that have been said and thought on the great questions of life, and that delicate literary skill which results from such training, and without which, as Mr. Stockton knows, we can never be true Christians. That exquisite musical instrument, as the cultured mind was just now called by some one, needs a great deal of tuning before the sounds it gives are any index of what musician is playing on it. But when it is tuned perfectly, what an unerring guide it is to us! With what harmonious vibrations does it answer at once to the touch of what is really good, what is really reasonable, as well as of what is merely pleasurable and piquant! How, by the musical thrill that goes through it, does it warn us at once when we come across a genuine *logion* of Jesus amongst the sayings vulgarly supposed to be most distinctive of Him, just as it warns us at one of Christie's sales whether a set of Dresden tea-things be real or spurious.'

'Excuse me,' began Mr. Rose drowsily, 'but even the real connoisseur in china——' and then he stopped, as if it were not worth his while to remonstrate.

'Think, for instance,' Mr. Luke continued, 'what a beautiful and profound harmony is at once made amongst our heartstrings, if culture have really tuned them, by such a story as that of the woman taken in adultery, or by the parable of the Prodigal Son, or by such simple pregnant sayings as, "*ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς*," and then turn for a moment to the theological accounts of the Trinity! Why,' exclaimed Mr. Luke with a sudden jauntiness, 'to sit on the key-board of an organ would make music compared to the discord, the jangling, the string-breaking that Church Catechisms, and Athanasian Creeds, and Episcopal speculations on the personality of the Creator, make on the musical instrument of the cultured mind. Ah,' Mr. Luke continued, 'could the Founder of Christianity only have found men of more culture as His immediate disciples and reporters—could He only have secured a biographer as simply honest as poor Boswell was——Well, well, but it's no use speculating about what might have been. Religion has had bad times hitherto, but now at last we—some of us, at least—are seeing the way to make them better; and really,' said Mr. Luke, 'not altogether without practical results. We are learning

a more fastidious horror of certain sorts of injustice, and of cruelty, and—' said Mr. Luke pausing—he was speaking now with a majestic slowness—

'Of vivisection,' cried a female voice with eagerness—an eagerness with just the least accent of enquiry in it. 'Yes,' cried Lady Grace, for it was she who had spoken, 'I see, Mr. Luke, what you mean by culture, and you give it a really wide and a really noble meaning. It is because we are growing cultivated that our sense of justice rises up against the way in which women have hitherto been treated, and the cruelties which dogma asserts the good God can practise, and the cruelties on the poor animals which wicked men do practise. It is because,' said Lady Grace, a glow mounting into her cheek, 'we are all getting more cultivated, that——'

'Ah!' exclaimed Mr. Luke, recoiling, 'my dear Lady Grace!' Lady Grace's voice failed her. 'All of us getting more cultivated!' Mr. Luke went on in a lamentable voice,—'all of us! Ah! were that but true!'

There was an awkward pause, which lasted for some seconds. It was broken in a quite unexpected manner. It was broken by Mr. Saunders, who, having for some time been again lying down and shutting his eyes, here suddenly sat up, and exclaimed in slow accents, full of composed irony,

'I hate bombast,'—(Mr. Luke thought this was *à propos* of his own last utterance),—'for,' Mr. Saunders went on, 'it is an approach to poetry; but I shall not be stigmatised, I trust, as poetical if I claim, soberly and plainly, to be a representative, an avatar, in fact,' said Mr. Saunders, scratching his head, 'of the true spirit of the age. I have been nourished on the most modern books; I have tried to yield as little as possible to traditional feelings about things, and I represent, I conceive, pretty fairly the opinions and the disposition to which the world, under the rigid guidance of facts and logic, must before long come. It will be well, therefore, to hint to you that there was hardly a view expressed in the discussion on culture and morality that, however well described it was by those present,' said Mr. Saunders, with parenthetical politeness, 'is not doomed. Your theory of the functions of history won't wash. It very nearly woke me up when you propounded it. The use of history, as Comte has so well said, is to teach us his philosophy of it; in other words, to show us generally what a sea of folly the world was before our time, and that it is only in our time that dry land has appeared. And as for what was said about Christian morality, with its puling sickly sentiments, and its ineradicable mysticism, do you mean to tell me—does Mr. Stockton, as a man of science, mean—venture,

I should say—to tell me—me to my face, that all this old-world religion and morality can be preserved five decades longer? that it will not have withered up, like grass, in the furnace of knowledge? Is all that hysteria, that obscene asceticism, that mad self-denial, that self-abasement of our holy and supreme humanity——’

‘Sir,’ exclaimed Mr. Stockton, ‘the sublime Founder of Christianity never taught the doctrine of self-abasement; and I say to you, and I will maintain to any man—or boy either—that His incomparable life and His divine heroism must be ensamples to us for all time.’

Mr. Stockton with his eyes again made a furtive appeal to Miss Merton.

‘Well,’ said Leslie, somewhat impatiently, ‘whether they must or no, this much, I think, we may all rest pretty sure of—that for every scrap we lose of even the severest Christian sentiment, every inch we cut off from the height of the Christian ideal, we shall not gain, but shall lose irreparably some capacity of happiness and pleasure—and of vicious pleasures,’ said Leslie, turning to Mr. Saunders, ‘just as much as of virtuous ones.’

‘I am not vicious,’ said Mr. Saunders, snappishly. ‘When I call pleasure the one criterion of action, I am thinking of very different pleasures from what you think I mean.’

‘What is Mr. Saunders’s notion of the most passionate pleasure?’ said Mrs. Sinclair, bewitchingly.

‘I agree with my great forerunner Hobbes,’ said Mr. Saunders, ‘that the strongest of all pleasures are those arising from the gratification of curiosity; and he is the real ethical philosopher who subordinates all other appetites to this, like Bacon, or——’ said Mr. Saunders, pausing to think of another example.

‘Like Bluebeard’s wives?’ enquired Mrs. Sinclair, naïvely. ‘I’m afraid I never give my husband his highest pleasure,’ she added, in a regretful whisper, ‘for I never let him open *my* letters, although I read all his.’

Mr. Saunders was completely silenced.

‘By the way,’ said Laurence suddenly, ‘there’s a letter to me of my poor old uncle’s, on this very subject—I mean, Christian morality—which I should like to read to you. It’s in the pavilion close by.’

‘Ah, please do; get it and read it to us,’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘But, Mr. Laurence,’ she added, with a mixture of severity and bewilderment, ‘of course we *must* have morality.’

‘Must!’ sighed Mrs. Sinclair. ‘It’s very easy to say *must*.’

‘Of course we must, Lady Ambrose,’ said Mr. Stockton.

‘Of course we must,’ added Lady Grace to her, cheerfully.

‘My dear,’ she said, with a little kindly laugh towards Mr. Saunders, ‘*he* doesn’t really doubt it.’

Mr. Saunders sprang to his feet as if an adder had stung him.

‘What!’ he exclaimed, standing in the centre of the group, and looking round him, ‘and do I not really doubt that the degrading practice of prayer, the fetish-worship of celibacy, of mortification, and so forth—do I not doubt that the foul faith in a future life, the grotesque conceptions of the theological virtues, and that preposterous idol of the market-place, the sanctity of marriage,—do you think I do not really doubt that humanity must retain these? Do you think I do not know that it is daily shaking itself freer from their blasting touch? I see,’ said Mr. Saunders, ‘that you, some of you, smile at me. I will show you in a moment how little cause you have to do that. I have,’ he said, preparing to walk away, with the expression of a man who was going to fetch a horse-whip, ‘at this moment in my port-manteau an analysis I have made of all the so-called moral sentiments—true morality, by the way, is, as all rational utilitarians know, the being just so much of a law to ourselves as shall prevent our being a law to our neighbours—I say, of all the Christian moral sentiments I have made an analysis, in which I trace them to such disgusting or paltry origins as shall at once rob them of all their pestilent *prestige*. I begin with the main root, the great first parent of all these evils, the conception of God, which I show may have arisen in seventy-three different ways, each one more commonplace than the other. If you will excuse me,’ said Mr. Saunders, walking away towards the house, ‘I will fetch the document itself.’

‘And I,’ said Laurence, ‘will go with you as far as the pavilion.’

‘And by the time you come back,’ said Lady Grace, ‘I dare say they will have brought tea. I told Johnson to let us have it out here.’

CHAPTER V.

THE pavilion, which still contained a part of old Mr. Laurence’s library, was a small quasi-classical building of white marble, commanding from its large windows a full view of the blue expanse of the sea. It was embowered behind in myrtles, three Scotch firs intertwined their boughs above it, and immediately before it was a balustraded space filled with flower-beds and flanked with statues. Whilst Laurence was unlocking the door, he looked round, and saw that Mr. Rose had followed him.

‘This is indeed a lovely spot!’ said Mr. Rose, looking gravely

about him. 'But I have come to see, if you will let me, your uncle's books that are here.'

Inside there was a faint musty smell, and a general sense that the place had been long disused. The walls were completely lined with books, whose gilded backs glimmered temptingly through the network of the bookcase doors. In the centre stood a table, covered with a cloth of faded crimson velvet; nothing on it but a tarnished ormolu inkstand, in the shape of a Roman temple, across the columns of which spiders had woven dusty webs. Placed stiffly before the table stood a gilded arm-chair, with cushions of crimson damask, and under it a foot-stool to match, which had been worn quite bare by the old philosopher's feet.

There was something dismal in all this; and Laurence, easily touched by what brought the past back to him, set to look, in complete silence, for the volumes he wanted. Mr. Rose seemed touched too, and surveyed the bookshelves solemnly, and without uttering a word. All of a sudden Laurence was startled by a violent rattling sound behind him, like what a monkey might make in trying to get out of its cage. Turning round, he discovered the cause of this. It was Mr. Rose, who was violently shaking one of the bookcase doors that refused to open.

'Don't pull too hard,' said Laurence; 'it has only stuck.'

'Dear me!' exclaimed Mr. Rose, with more excitement than he often showed; 'why, here is the "*Cultes secrets des Dames Romaines*," and I can't get at it.'

'Ah!' said Laurence, 'I didn't see which door you were pulling at. No—that door *is* locked, and the key is lost.'

'Lost!' echoed Mr. Rose.

'I was thinking of having those books burnt,' said Laurence. 'They're a beastly lot, and there are others, I'm afraid, like them, in plenty, all round the room.'

Mr. Rose said nothing, but passed immediately to the next bookcase, and began reading over the titles to himself with a grave eagerness.

'Sanizarius, Johannes Secundus, Aretino, Lucian. Here indeed is a curious medley. Yes—and "*Justine*," too—good heavens! and the "*Hermaphroditus*"—and with those singular *Apophoreta* appended! I gave four pounds for my copy.' Such were the murmuring sounds that kept escaping from his lips. 'Ah!' at last he exclaimed with a little cry, 'but here is the book I really want—a copy of Meursius! May I take this one with me to read?' said he to Laurence, as they were moving to the door.

'Pray do,' said Laurence; 'not that I see what it is. But let me beg you to be careful with it.'

Mr. Rose was much pleased with the aspect of the party as they rejoined it. Tea had appeared, and not tea only, but Dr. Jenkinson and Mr. Storks also, and there was on all sides a general effervescence of small talk, audible in some places, in others a busy whisper. A little wicker-work table that was being laden by two footmen with bright gleaming silver, piles of strawberries, and dainty tea-cups, might have passed for a rural altar heaped with offerings, and Lady Grace for a ministering priestess. A new animation, too, seemed added to the scene by the presence of Dr. Jenkinson. He had been indulging indoors in a nap that had quite restored him; and his face was now all a-twinkle with a fresh benignity that had, however, like an early spring morning, just a faint suspicion of frost in it. The doctor's nature was a constant one; so he had seated himself once again by Mrs. Sinclair, and had been begging to know some particulars about the New Republic. Mr. Stockton at the same time was asking Lady Violet what she thought of their ideal society as far as they had got with it.

'I don't know,' she answered petulantly. 'As far as I can see, you want everyone to read a great many books and to have only one opinion. For my part, I hate people who do the one, and a society that does the other.'

'What a charming girl Lady Violet is!' said Mr. Stockton to Lady Grace, as he stood by the tea table. '*Such* penetration! *such* vivacity! *such* originality!'

Mr. Rose meanwhile was buying himself golden opinions of Lady Grace, by helping her page—a pretty boy, with light curling hair—to arrange some tumblers and a jug of champagne-cup on the grass. Laurence did not find himself quite so happy. He had been very attentive in supplying Miss Merton's wants; but, having been called away for some moments, he found, on returning to bring some cream to her, that Allen in this office had been before him, and, seated by Miss Merton's side, was talking to her in an eager undertone. 'Ah!' he sighed, 'that boy is a more interesting life to her than I am, because life has more interest for him.' Laurence's thoughts, however, were almost immediately distracted by the appearance of a servant with a tray heaped up with letters, an event that caused a pleasant excitement amongst the whole party. Lady Ambrose's face especially grew delightfully radiant as a large envelope, that was stiff as she handled it, was delivered to her. She just peeped inside, without extracting the contents, and saw the words '*To have the honour to meet—*' printed at the top of a card. The peep was enough. Her Duchess had not forgotten her. Lady Ambrose was happy. Nor

was Lady Ambrose, it seemed, the only person to whom the post had brought good news. Mr. Herbert and Mr. Rokeby now made their appearance. Mr. Rokeby's countenance was grave and sad as usual; but Mr. Herbert, who had an open newspaper in his hand, which he had just received, betrayed an unwonted cheerfulness both by his smile and the lightness of his steps.

'Ah!' he exclaimed to Laurence, who asked him what he would have, 'did you say strawberries and cream? Yes, by all means let me have some, for there is nothing I think in the whole world so pretty or so nice as strawberries and cream. And now,' he went on as soon as he was seated, 'how, my dear Laurence, are you getting on with your Utopia? You ought to make a very beautiful thing out of it—all of you together, with so many charming ladies.'

'Do you think so?' said Laurence, in great surprise at Mr. Herbert's cheerful view of things.

'Yes,' answered Mr. Herbert, slowly and with decision. 'Ladies, I always think, so long as they are good and honest, have beautiful imaginations. Now, as far as I could gather, what you proposed to do was this—to form some picture of how you yourselves would live were you all thrown together in some place where you had to rely solely upon your own resources. And there is, in the whole world, no spectacle so entirely lovely as a company of highly-bred men and women living together by their own exertions, and producing first whatever things are really necessary, and then whatever things are really beautiful.'

'Do they often do that?' said Dr. Jenkinson very sharply, yet more or less to himself.

'Sh!' said Mrs. Sinclair to him, with a confidential smile that nearly turned his head.

'Such a community,' Mr. Herbert went on, 'I am myself taking steps to get established, actually established in the England of our own day, and I am trying at this moment to purchase certain tracts of land on which it may settle itself. It will consist of men and women—if possible, of ladies and gentlemen—each believing in some religion, I care not what that religion is—who desire to live entire and harmonious lives, at once pious, happy, and serviceable, and who will thus form together a society sound at heart and in lovely health, sane of mind and sane of body, and as opposite as possible to the society of the world at large in the present century, where the poor are but a mass of groaning machinery, that has not even the semblance of rationality; and the rich, with only the semblance of it, are but a set of gaudy dancing mario-nettes, which it is the machinery's one work to keep in motion.'

'We,' said Laurence, 'have been beginning in a rather different way. We have been dealing, in our thoughts, with the world at large, not with a small community taking itself out of the world. We have begun with considering the ideal life, the life most satisfying to all our aspirations that we can imagine for the most favoured classes—for a genuine aristocracy, in short; and then we shall extend our view, and see what this implies and leads to.'

'Indeed!' said Mr. Herbert, meditatively. 'Now, that is a really beautiful way of setting to work. And how far, let me ask you, have you got with your picture of this aristocracy?'

'At present,' said Laurence, 'we have got no farther than generalities. We began with agreeing, for we started with the understanding that our society must be cradled in all that is most beautiful in art and architecture; that it must be perfect in all the arts of life, in grace of manner and deportment——'

'Excuse me,' said Mr. Herbert, 'but beautiful houses and pictures, and the manners of fine ladies and gentlemen, are beautiful only as the expression of a beautiful spirit; they are altogether hateful as the ornament or the covering of a vile one.'

'Exactly,' said Laurence; 'and it is our one aim to conceive a life whose inward spirit shall be worthy of its outward form. We have gone on therefore to see that our society must be in the highest sense *cultivated*; that is, its members must be trained, all of them, in the palaestra of personal experience; and also, through literature, in the experience of all the world. They must be wide awake to all the questions and views of things that the thought and feeling of the age, in its perpetual change, can put before us——'

'Stay a moment,' said Mr. Herbert, shaking his head gravely, yet not as if he altogether rejected the notion. 'The great question is, whether in modern thought and feeling there *is* anything with which a wise man can have the least concern, and which it were not better for him to turn his back on altogether. I say this is a very grave question, and it is one which at the beginning of this afternoon I was inclined to answer in the most gloomy way. But I have never, at any time, quite given up all hope that a healthier state of things may be yet some day in store for us, and that certain elements of good may be at secret work within all this mass of evil. And I have within this last five minutes received news which, in an altogether notable way, has confirmed that hope, when it seemed to be on the point of leaving me. There is a letter,' said Mr. Herbert, 'in this newspaper, "The Evening Standard," which I have just received, relative to the prospects of the English iron trade; and I read in that letter that nineteen foundries in Middlesborough have been closed within

the last three months, and the Moloch fires in their blast-furnaces extinguished; that ten more foundries in the same place are scarcely able to continue work, and must very shortly be closed likewise; that the dense smoke-cloud that so long has darkened that whole country is beginning to clear away, and will open ere long upon astonished human eyes, that have never yet beheld it, the liquid melted blue of the deep wells of the sky. This fact, I say, has come to me this afternoon as an omen of singular comfort and of entire beauty, and leads me to attach a more serious meaning than I might else have done to any Utopian dreams of a better state of society. It will be therefore a matter of no small interest to me to have some picture of that nobler and more beautiful kind of life which those of us who feel the evils of the present profess to be longing for. So come,' said Mr. Herbert encouragingly, 'and let me hear some more. You have begun, as I can see, with an entirely right and lovely outline. Your society is to unite wide knowledge and vigilant thought with beautiful and gracious action——'

'Yes,' said Laurence; 'and in our views of things, in our philosophies and our religions, we shall have the completest toleration. We shall let all fairly fight together, and put our faith in the survival of the fittest. For, it seems to us, that, if we do but give the contending beliefs of our day a fair battle-ground, their struggle will become one, not of confusion, but of healthful growth. Beneath all our differences, however, there must be, we all admit, one point of agreement—that is, our common acceptance of the old moral standards—the old Christian notions of right and wrong, the old Christian sense of the importance and significance of life. Upon this point we are all at one——'

'Who can doubt it?' exclaimed Mr. Stockton.

'Mr. Saunders,' said Laurence, 'who is not here now, was denying it on scientific grounds.'

'Pooh!' interposed Mr. Storks. 'As far as I know, any theory of life and morals is compatible with science.'

'But we,' Laurence went on, 'are all of us unanimous. Not that we are fancying our ideal society by any means an assembly of saints. There will be good and bad in it, as there always must be. But for good and bad alike, this recognition of the old moral standard is, we believe, equally necessary. To make this matter more clear, I was just now going to read a letter of my poor uncle's on the very subject—the supreme importance to all men, be they ever so bad, of a general reverence amongst mankind for a mystical morality, and for the beauty of holiness.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Herbert gravely, 'I like this. Let us by all means hear the letter.'

'It is wonderful,' said Lady Ambrose in a solemn whisper, 'how even bad men, like old Mr. Laurence, know at heart how it is really best to be good, and to believe in the true religion.'

'This,' said Laurence, placing on his lap a large folio volume, bound in red morocco, its gilded sides tooled with armorial bearings, 'is a collection of letters, verses, and scraps of various kinds, which, amongst the many things he wrote, my uncle in his old age thought worth preserving, and which he had privately printed. What I am going to read to you is a letter to myself. It was written but six months before he died.'

'If human life, my dear nephew,' Laurence began, 'be but a poor affair at the best—a poor, wearying, vain affair, as I, who have nearly done with it, naturally think, men must surely be fools indeed if they help to make it still worse than it need be. When it is served up to us in its best form, it may offer us, it is true, many piquant, many exquisite tastes, passing though they be, and leaving a sick pain behind them, which trick us from moment to moment into thinking it worth living; but its raw materials are like coarse meats and insipid vegetables, which nothing but the nicest art can make appetising to a rational man; and if these are set before us *au naturel*, not elaborately dressed and seasoned, not heightened with false flavours and disguised under false forms, we shall find ourselves like tired guests without an appetite, set down to a gross meal which we must eat to the end, although every mouthful nauseates us. And yet such, Otho—such a meal as this will be all that in another fifty years the world will find that it has left itself, if it goes on as it is going on now. This is a sad foreboding, and you may, perhaps, think it a vain one—the child of an old man's melancholy. But if you think this you are wrong. It is, indeed, the parent of melancholy, but it is not the child of it. No; I draw my augury from a fact which, living out of the world as I do, I see, indeed, only from a distance, but which, day by day, is becoming plainer, and can now be concealed from no one. That fact is the increasing moral license which all men are now noticing in modern society, and which all good—all earnest men are deploring.

'You will be surprised, I do not doubt, that I speak thus. But the reason, when once you see it, will be plain enough. You know the value I set upon the art and literature of the ancients; you know how in many ways I think modern life barbarous when compared with theirs. But my admiration does not blind me. I can see that the superiority is not all on one side. Take, for an instance, the single matter of humour. Compare the ancient humourists with the modern. Think for a moment of Lucian, of Aristo-

phanes, of Plautus, of Petronius, of Horace; and think then of Erasmus, Swift, Cervantes, of Voltaire, of Sterne. Does not the memory merely of their names bring home to you what a gulf there is between the ancient world and the modern, and how infinitely richer in humour the latter is than the former? Is not the modern humour an altogether different thing from the ancient—broader and deeper beyond comparison or measurement? The humour of the ancients could raise a laugh, and a laugh could express all the feelings raised by it: it was bright and shallow, it was often noisy and brawling; it was like the bright sparkle on a shallow rippling stream. But our modern humour is like the silent, snake-like lights in a still water, that go coiling down into unfathomable depths, as it lures our thoughts onwards to the contemplation of endless issues. The twinkle in the eyes of a Sterne or a Cervantes seems to hint to us of Eleusinian mysteries with a triumphant solemn treachery; and wakes our souls, as we catch it, into a sudden thrill of delicious, furtive wisdom. Such humour as this may excite laughter: but no laughter can ease our feelings fully—they almost demand tears; and even tears are not enough for us. Of such humour as this the ancients had hardly a notion; it differs from theirs as the man differs from the baby, and seems almost like a new sense, peculiar to the modern world.

‘Now, to what do we owe this—this new source of pleasure, which is to many of the wisest men the one thing that has made life bearable? We owe it simply to this—to the growth of that marvellous system of moral laws and sentiments by which Christianity has slowly transfigured the world; breathing new fears, new aspirations into every life; giving us new standards by which to measure every action, so that scarce a single choice or refusal has been left indifferent, and not more or less nearly associated with the most solemn consequences. Do but think for a moment of the greatest modern humourists, and you will see that this is so. The humour of Don Quixote depends entirely on Christian notions of duty and of chivalry. Swift’s fierce teaching, that man is hateful, gains all its force from Christ’s, that man is lovable. Gulliver owes its point to the Gospels. Sterne sees everything “big with infinite jest.” But why? Because Christianity has made everything big also with infinite solemnity. A possible moral meaning is secreted over the whole surface of life, like the scented oil in the cells on the surface of an orange skin. The humourist catches the perfume of these volatile oils, as they are crushed out and wasted by our every action.

‘But it is not humour only that Christianity has thus enriched. All life’s choicer pleasures owe their best tastes to it likewise.

Love in itself, for instance, is, as everyone knows who has felt it, the coarsest and most foolish of all our feelings. Leave it free to do what it pleases, and we soon cease to care what it does. But Christianity, with a miraculous ingenuity, has confined and cramped it into so grotesque and painful a posture, and set such vigilant guardians to keep it there, that any return to its natural freedom is a rapture, an adventure, and a triumph, which none but the wisest and most skilful can compass with grace or safety, and which wise men, therefore, think worth compassing. And in this way, strange as it seems, what trifles light as air become precious to us—a forbidden kiss, a light pressure of the hand, a look, a smile, a whisper, be it never so little too tender—the expression of an emotion, be it never so little too genuine! Otho, that reminds me. Think of that flower of Christian civilisation, the inuendo, and understand all life from that. It will explain the whole matter to you—love, humour, and all the rest of life's enjoyments. Go into a company where the talk is quite free—under no restriction, where men and women just say what they feel, and stick at nothing, paying shame and modesty no sympathetic homage. In such company the inuendo droops and dies. The conversation loses all its bouquet and sparkle. Wit is impossible; dexterity and grace are impossible. We *may* say everything. We care to say nothing. And as with conversation, so will it be with life.

*Now then, I conceive, you will comprehend my meaning, and see that the apprehensions I have just expressed to you are but too rational and too well founded. You see what we owe to Christian morals—that marvellous system of restriction, at once of such exquisite subtlety and such immense strength. You see what we shall lose if we lose this. And, alas! we *are* losing it. The tone of society is day by day growing looser and looser; its practice more free and fearless. Luxury and self-indulgence are the order of the day. The notion of duty is fast vanishing. Frivolity and Pleasure have nothing left to struggle with. Conjugal infidelity is growing more and more common, those who are guilty of it are guilty of it without fear or courage; and those even who have too little spirit to be ever tempted into committing it are ceasing to feel any horror at it, or express any reprehension. Respectability itself is ceasing to be respectable.

*As long as Christianity was firmly fixed as a religion, such symptoms as these need have excited no alarm. We might wound morals as much as we liked, conquer them and lay them prostrate, but we could not kill them. They were always kept alive by faith, and were always ready to rise and renew the game. But the faith is now gone. That old, sublime imposture is, alas, ceasing now to dupe

even the most foolish. Morals have, therefore, nothing but their own legs to stand upon, and if we once knock them quite off these, we shall never be able to help them up again. Our old playfellow will be quite dead. We shall have nothing left to play with—to knock down, to irritate, to outwit, to elude. Wisdom and folly will be on the same level; for wisdom is but the detection of falsehood, and there will no longer be any falsehood to detect. Pleasure, like religion, can only thrive under persecution, and pleasure will soon have lost its persecutors. Wit and humour, love and poetry, will all alike have left us; and man will be separated from the animals only by his capacity for ennui.

‘I had once hoped that the middle classes—that vast and useless body, who have neither the skill that produces their wealth, nor the taste that can enjoy it—might have proved themselves at least of some use, by preserving the traditions of a sound, respectable morality; that they might have kept alive the nation’s power of being shocked and scandalised at wit, or grace, or freedom. But, no; they too are changed. With awkward halting gait they are waddling in the footsteps of their betters, and they will soon have made vice as vulgar as they long ago made virtue.

‘What is to be done, then? I know not.

‘To me, of course, all this matters little. Such flavours as life has, have lasted me thus far; nor am I likely to find myself fit for any pleasures I shall not find. The world’s growing blankness will not affect me. I shall never look into a woman’s eyes again. One of my own is blind now, and the other is so dim that I doubt if the best paid beauty could contrive to look into it with much forbidden tenderness. For me the feast is over; but I still see the empty dishes and the bottles about me, and I know that I have eaten and drunk out of them food and wine not altogether flavourless, not altogether gross; for the natural tastes of all were so well disguised. But you, my boy—what sort of feast will be left for you when I am taken away from the evil that is to come? Your prospect does not seem to be a cheerful one. I can offer no remedy. But think over what I have said.’

When Laurence closed the book there was a silence of some moments, as if no one knew exactly how to take what had just been read. But at last Donald Gordon exclaimed, in his devoutest of soft whispers: ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ The words acted like a spell; the ice was broken. In another moment Mr. Herbert was in the full flow of his most emphatic eloquence.

‘Thank you, my dear Laurence,’ he exclaimed; ‘thank you much, indeed. There is something in what you have just read us that seems to me quite precious and peculiar. Nor do I find any

such honesty in any creed sung by priests in churches as I do in this sardonic confession of that great truth, which the present age as a whole is resolutely bent upon forgetting, that the grand knowledge for a man to know is the essential and eternal difference between right and wrong, between base and noble; that there is a right and a noble to be striven for, not for the sake of its consequences, but in spite of them; and that it is this fact alone which, under countless forms, is the one thing affirmed in all human art and implied in all serviceable learning. Your Cervantes smiles it to you; your Swift curses it to you; your Bernard of Morlaix hymns it to you; your saddened Shakespeare tells it to you in every way. Strange, indeed, is it, and mournful, that we see a time when the one truth that we live and die by not only needs to be pointed out to us, but asserted passionately in the teeth of those whom we have elected as our wisest teachers. However,' said Mr. Herbert with a smile, 'you have truly gone the right way to work in constructing an ideal society, if you make it recognise this before all things, and see how witness is borne to it by every pleasure and every interest of life.'

'Yes,' said Laurence, 'it is this latent sense of right and wrong that gives even our lightest conversation its best sparkle, and beads its surface over with its bright, crisp foam of half-conscious irony. The moral idea is, as it were, a perpetual note, the pitch of which we never forget, and of which we become delicately conscious by the tone of our own daily talk falling to delicious intervals below it. Thus we talk of killing time, and so on, as being the great end of our lives; of money or position being the only thing to marry for; and of marriage ties as if they were always a weariness, or a grotesque torture.'

'And thus,' said Leslie, 'we say a man has had, *par excellence*, a success when he has, for his own selfish pleasure, done a woman the greatest injury possible.'

'And thus,' said Donald Gordon softly, 'when he does not tell all the world he has done so, we say he is a perfect gentleman.'

'Yes,' said Leslie wearily, 'and what is all that bitter feeling against life, which comes to many men as a kind of moral tonic, but a tribute to the worth of the very thing that we condemn as worthless? Cynicism is but a denial, that can be supported by arguments and instances, of a truth that cannot always be supported by either. But the belief in that truth must be firm and rock-like all the same, or how else should we dash our aching heads against it?'

'Perfectly true,' said Mr. Herbert. 'And you see the truth of it in the deepest poetry even more clearly than in the bitterest

cynicism. You have a Shakespeare, for instance, writing of life as

A tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing ;

and reflecting only, as he contemplates a murdered monarch, that

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

I say you have a Shakespeare reflecting thus, for in such lines as these I am convinced we have Shakespeare himself speaking. Well, and whence do such lines as these get their marvellous power to move us, to purge our souls by that strange mixture of pity and terror? Is it from the truth of them—the actual and entire truth? Far from it—far from it. For in moments when we wholly think them true, they are nothing but dismal platitudes. It is only in moments when we have not lost our vision that life might mean, and does mean so much, that we are touched or roused by the thought that we make it seem to mean so little. In the midst of this fitful fever we know that there is such a thing as health, and we long and cry for it with an unfathomable, wistful earnestness.

'Yes,' murmured Mr. Rose, nodding his head in meditative approval; 'all ideals must tend to make life richer, because they increase its store of comparisons and contrasts. I often myself read over the "Dies Iræ" before I turn to my Theocritus, or my Greek anthology, as poor Keats put cayenne pepper on his tongue that he might better enjoy the cool delight of his claret.'

'Surely,' said Mr. Stockton, 'it is quite needless to prove all this. It is impossible to doubt that there is a solemnity in life; indeed, the less we think about it, as it seems to me, the clearer does this noble truth appear to us.'

'Well, then,' said Laurence, 'you see we have got thus far, Mr. Herbert. Our ideal society is a society cultivated all through, from the surface to the centre: first, in every grace of outer life; secondly, in a mental grasp of life as a whole, with all its possibilities and experience; and last—what is implied in this—in a corporate reverence, despite all that some of its members may do and think for morality, for religion, for duty, as mysterious, sacred, and incalculable things. And now that we have thus settled these broad, general qualities, we must grow a little more matter-of-fact, and see how they will manifest themselves in the practical ordering of our lives.'

'Ah,' said Mr. Herbert, 'that is what I long to hear. And in this practical consideration of the life of an aristocracy, perhaps I can give a hint to you that may be of some service. I divide life into three parts: *the life of personal experience*, which includes

such things as our own private, personal love and sorrows, the gracious gleams of inner light that have blessed us, the black phantoms that we have had all alone to wrestle with, and that sacred circle of affections also, connected with our own families, and our rare and special friends; secondly, *the life of society*, in which our private lives sink beneath the surface, yet in which we compare these very lives with those of a wider circle; and, thirdly, *the life of duty*, the endeavour to provide for others, for other classes especially, those things in life which our own culture and knowledge tell us to be most really valuable. This life of duty is in a special way the heritage of an aristocracy; and it is a sense of its presence that imparts to an aristocracy that air of self-command, of dignity, and of freedom, which is one of the rarest beauties that can belong to man or woman, and is, in its nature, confined to so few. Now, this being the case, I wish you would consider, first, what is the life that you yourselves would lead amongst yourselves—with reference, I mean, to your own class; and that then you would consider the life of duty—or the relationship of your own class to other classes.'

Mr. Herbert's counsel was taken readily by all. The afternoon, however, had been wearing on apace, and the loud sound of the distant dressing-bell came as a sudden warning that the conversation for the present must end here.

Slowly, amongst the lengthening shadows, our friends strolled back to the house. All seemed loth to quit the lovely garden scene. All seemed to have been touched by the beauty of it; Mr. Rose especially, who seemed to feel each touch of light and colour with a hushed rapture. Looking round as she was going towards the house, Miss Merton beheld him, standing with folded arms, gazing out westward over the sea, where sky and water were mingling in an amber haze, and she was touched by his absorbed look of contemplation. In a few moments Laurence drew near him and paused by him; but for some moments Mr. Rose remained still silent, as though his reverie was not to be broken in upon. At last he turned sharp round to Laurence, and fixed him with his dreamy, melancholy eyes.

'As you do not seem to set much store by it,' he said, 'I will give you twenty-five pounds for your "*Cultes secrets des Dames Romaines*."'

(To be continued.)

An Aunt by Marriage.

BY JAMES PAYN.

I SUPPOSE there are more people who go abroad for pleasure, and detest it, than who affect to admire 'Paradise Lost.' When one considers the packing, and the crossing the Channel, and the jabber upon the other side of it, which not one in ten of us understands and the tenth only imperfectly; the discomforts and delays of travel, the impertinence of the officials, the expense, and above all the growing sense of exile—for many men drag a lengthening chain behind them with every inch of distance they place between themselves and home—I say, putting all these things together, the continent is Purgatory, or worse, to hundreds of good people who pretend that they find it Heaven. This is especially the case with men of mature years, who have not been used to foreign travel, but take it up because their hardly acquired wealth has given them a position which seems to demand it. Their wives and daughters compel them to go over to Boulogne, or to see Paris, or to tour in Switzerland, or to visit Italy—according as their means enable them to be miserable on an increasing scale. I have met honest British citizens wandering about the home of the Cæsars, who have confessed to me with tears in their eyes that the Colosseum in the Regent's Park was quite lonely, dreary, and ruinous enough for their taste, without their being dragged over mountain passes to behold by moonlight its Roman rival. They have told me in moments of confidence how they have been flea-bitten, and bug-bitten, and mosquito-bitten; how their long hours of weary travel by day have been followed by wearier nights; how they have sweltered in the 'sunny south,' without a draught of their favourite liquor to cool their tongues, though they have offered ten times its proper price for it; how they have been robbed right and left, and insulted everywhere; and how ever in their jaded ears there whispers a monotonous voice, saying, 'What an enormous fool I am.'

I know one good soul—a bulwark of his native city—who has visited 'the Engadine' and 'the Dolomites' without being aware of it. His wife took him thither, assuring him in each case it was the correct tour to take, but when he reached them or when he left them, or what they were, he could not tell you, to save his life. What he knows, and for which he thanks Heaven every night he lays his head upon his pillow, is, that he has somehow got home

again, and that his holiday time is 'over for the next nine months.

Of all the honest souls that ever crossed 'the silver streak,' and heard (without catching) the accents of 'the *parlez-vous*' (as he always called the French folks), my uncle Nokes was the most thoroughly British.

'I once took French leave at school, sir (and was flogged for it), and that,' he was wont to say, 'was the only association I ever had with anything French, or ever mean to have.' But man proposes—and it so happened, thanks to the irony of fate, that my uncle proposed to a Frenchwoman.

The circumstances were very curious, and I think interesting; at all events, they interested me, when they took place, exceedingly: for I, his nephew, had up to that time been his heir, and his marriage disinherited me; though he always said that it was *my* marriage, and not his, that did the mischief. The fact is, I chose my wife myself, instead of submitting to Uncle Nathaniel's views on the matter, and he never forgave it. 'If you marry Clara,' said he, 'as sure as your name is Charles, I'll marry, myself, before the year is out.' Now, whenever it was possible, I knew Uncle Nathaniel always kept his word; but yet I did not believe that at the age of sixty, and having been a confirmed bachelor all his life, he could, just to spite me, commit such an act of folly. I had also a fond and foolish hope that nobody would have him.

So Clara and I married.

We wrote my uncle a joint letter which I should have thought would have touched any heart (and I am bound to say his was a very tender one); but he sent it back to us, with the date (it was the first of May) underlined, and a footnote in his own handwriting: 'When this comes round again, you will have an aunt-in-law.'

We had been such fast friends, my uncle and I, that I could not believe but that he would forgive me; and my Clara was such a sweet angel, that if he would but give her the opportunity, I felt she must win him over. But he would never so much as see her. It was always his fixed idea that I was to 'marry money,' and bring it into the wine trade in which we were both engaged: and she was the orphan daughter of a country clergyman without a shilling. In vain I told him she was the dearest girl in the world: he replied that I should doubtless find her so, since she would cost me all his fortune, which would otherwise have one day been mine. I was to have been his partner, but since I had chosen to attach myself to another firm, I must take the consequences (however many there might be of them) on my own shoulders. He was

jocose in his manner: it was natural to him to be so; but he was none the less determined. Determination was also *my forte*—it was hereditary in the Nokes family, which unfortunately the money wasn't; but in my case he called it by another word—Infernal Obstinaey. My union with Clara quite separated us from him; I saw nothing of him, and heard nothing until long afterwards, when the circumstances came to my knowledge which I am about to relate. In the meantime Clara and I were living on our means—namely, on the simple thousand pounds of which I was possessed.

I have said Uncle Nathaniel was soft-hearted except where his prejudices and self-will were concerned: I may go a step further, and say he was as tender as a spring chicken—or a green goose; and he made more bad debts than any other man in the wine trade in consequence. He had also rather a slavish admiration for people of quality, which I need not say caused him to be swindled worse than the other failing.

A new customer had been recently added to his list, when our disagreement took place, in the person of Count Albert de Montmorenci. If this young gentleman was not a good judge of wine, it was not because he had not the opportunity of tasting the best—and a good deal of it. He drank like a gold-fish, but Nokes and Co. never saw the colour of his gold. He lived with his sister in fashionable lodgings in Pall Mall, and had been introduced to us by the Secretary of the French Embassy ('under La Rose,' as my uncle used to say), so that the connection promised well enough; indeed, the Count continued to promise, but my uncle could never get his money. At last, weary of importuning his debtor by such delicate reminders as 'It has doubtless escaped your lordship's recollection that in April last we had the honour to forward to you for the third time our little account,' my uncle called in person in Pall Mall. He was rather fond of having to take this course with eminent personages, since he flattered himself he made an impression. They did not expect to find in their wine merchant a gentleman attired in a blue coat and white waistcoat, with a hot-house flower in his button-hole, and possessed of such natural manners. He was a sort of man to tell you all his family history, and how much money he had in the funds, within five minutes of your acquaintance with him. I dare say he told the Count about myself and dear Clara, and I am quite certain he told him about the money in the funds, from what subsequently took place. Instead of paying Uncle Nathaniel, the Count introduced him to his sister, Mademoiselle Bella de Montmorenci; whom we afterwards used to call Bella-donna, because her name was poison to us. She was twenty-four and a beauty, though not perhaps altogether '*without paint*.' I don't know whether it was on that first occasion, or on

the second visit, that my uncle informed her that he was under a solemn vow to marry within the year; but she was very soon possessed of the fact; and in the end she consented to be the victim. No doubt she got her *quid pro quo*; but I am bound to say that she did not snap at him like a pike: on the contrary, she temporised like a trimmer. It was only through her brother's persuasion, to whom she was devoted—and who wanted money, no matter how it came—that she promised to become Mrs. Nokes: and this did not take place till Clara and I had been married for eleven months, and had been blessed, for one of them, with Chickabiddy. The arrival of that admirable infant was duly notified to my uncle, but received from him very little attention: indeed, he sent back my note, with the letters N.A. neatly written upon the envelope, which was his business custom with communications that were not considered worth a reply. It was the only specimen of his handwriting with which I had been favoured—with one exception already mentioned—since our disagreement, and I felt too surely that it would be the last.

It was late in April that the infatuated old gentleman departed for Paris, and installed himself quite alone in the hotel of the Four Seasons, for a few days previous to his nuptials. He deserved to suffer, of course, but his tribulations during that period were very severe. If the gay young Count Albert de Montmorenci—whose experiences of life had been mainly confined, I believe, to gambling rooms and casinos—had been shipwrecked, in his evening clothes, upon a desolate island, he could not have been more thoroughly out of his element than was Mr. Nathaniel Nokes at his Paris hotel. His only friend, the only person who (very literally) understood him, was Susan, the English chambermaid, without whom he would perhaps have perished of inanition: for the house was not at all anglicised save by her presence, but was an old-fashioned thoroughly French inn, patronised by the friends of the old legitimate nobility, and recommended by the Count himself as being quiet and exclusive. He was doubtless anxious to keep his new brother-in-law 'dark,' as long as it was possible.

To Susan my poor uncle had been as frank as to the rest of the world: she knew all about his past—including his quarrel with myself and Clara—within the first twenty-four hours; and as much about his future as he did himself; which indeed was solely this, that he was going to marry Mademoiselle de Montmorenci on the ensuing Friday. He had been introduced to none of her relations (nor even knew if she had any) except her brother; and had not exchanged half-a-dozen words with her in any known language. His French was so very English and her English so very French,

that they had the greatest difficulty in making themselves intelligible to one another. The main point however, so far as the Count was concerned (namely, my uncle's fortune), was quite settled, and settled on his sister; while on the other hand the ancient lineage of the Montmorencis was unquestionable. It pleased my poor uncle to hear that some five hundred years ago there had been a Constable in the family; it sounded something like English, and was so far preferable to gendarme. His Bella and he, as he confessed to himself (and Susan), would probably have nothing in common for some time to come—except his property: but though he had great misgivings about everything, he was resolved to keep his word, not so much to 'the Montmorenci' (as he called her), but to himself and indirectly to me and Clara, though we would have very gladly excused him. Susan, with well-meaning if somewhat familiar frankness, used to venture to hint that he might be too much in a hurry about the matter, and even be altogether making a mistake.

'You are so fond of old England, sir, that I doubt whether you ought not to have chosen your wife from your native land. It seems so strange to come to Paris of all places to choose one!'

Then he would sharply ask her what she meant by *that*, and what she could possibly know about it; to which she would quietly reply, that she had lived in Paris for some years. Then again from sheer good-nature, rather than from want of tact, of which indeed the girl had plenty, she would be always putting in a word in favour of poor disinherited me, which, coupled with his own private remorse upon my account, almost drove him distracted; but he could not afford to quarrel with Susan, for, as I have said, in the hotel of the Four Seasons there was no English spoken, and he could hardly have lived without her.

On his wedding morning he gave her a ten-pound note, and parted from her to go to the Embassy (where he was to be married) as from the only friend he had in France.

In less than an hour he was back again at the hotel, ringing his sitting-room bell like a madman, and demanding Susan, who was as usual at that hour sweeping the corridor.

'Well, sir,' said she, presenting herself, broom in hand, 'what has happened?'

'Everything—that is, nothing. The jade has jilted me, and I am not to be married to her after all,' was the unexpected reply. Susan had the good sense not to congratulate him, but let him proceed to state his grievance. It seemed that at the last moment *the Montmorenci* had found herself unable to become Mrs. Nokes,

and, in fact, had eloped with some gentleman more to her taste, though perhaps less to her advantage.

My uncle had found the Count waiting at the Embassy, full of apologies and 'desolation,' and offering in the handsomest way to give him satisfaction with what he called 'the national weapon of his country,' the pistol, though the small sword had been hitherto his (the Count's) only wear. Even this would not have given my uncle much superiority in the field, as he had never had a pistol in his hand—except a pocket pistol: and as for the 'national weapon,' as he afterwards confessed, he thought for his part that it had been the umbrella. Of course he had declined to fight the man, but if there was justice in Heaven—or at least in Paris, he was resolved to get what he called his rights: compensation for his blighted hopes, damages. It was not on this point, however, that he wanted Susan's advice. He felt that even she could not be of much service to him in prosecuting his claims in a Court of Justice; but as his only guide, philosopher, friend, and interpreter in a foreign land, he wanted her assistance for something else—nobody will believe it who did not know my uncle—to get him a wife in lieu of the Montmorenci. There were only six days for him to do it in; only six days before the twelve months were gone, in which he had sworn to become a Benedict; and he was as much resolved to keep his word as ever. 'How, Susan, how,' cried he, 'am I to find a respectable young woman to marry me upon so short a notice?'

It was a question most absurd and unreasonable, of course, but then my uncle's position was absurd and certainly without reason—or at all events good reason. He had no business to want to be married at all.

Susan took the bull by the horns (if I was not his nephew, and bound to reverence, I might have said the donkey by his ears) at once: 'Sir,' said she, 'have you got an almanac?'

As a business man he kept one in his breast-pocket, and at once produced it: he could not guess what she wanted, but, through having been so dependent on her, he felt a blind confidence in everything that she suggested. She took it, looked at the month of February, and returned it with a shake of her head.

'No, sir; it won't do.'

'What won't do? what did you expect *would do* in a crisis like this?' he enquired.

'Well, sir,' said she demurely, 'I had thought it might be leap year, but it isn't.'

'What? you impudent hussy! Do you mean to say that you dreamt of proposing yourself in the place of the Montmorenci?'

It was plain enough that she did; and Susan was very far from plain. He had noticed that before, but had hitherto refrained from dwelling upon the idea, out of regard for the (supposed) feelings of the Montmorenci; it had struck him that very morning, when she was sewing on a shirt-button for him as he was starting for the Embassy.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said she humbly. 'I am afraid I have been taking a liberty.'

'Yes,' said he, chucking her thoughtfully under the chin; 'you should never take liberties. Drop that duster from your eyes, Susan; don't cry, for it makes them red, and I rather like your eyes.' He had not dwelt upon that idea before, for the reason already stated, but he had always rather liked her eyes; and the reason for not liking them no longer existed. It would be a dreadful come-down from the Montmorenci, but then he must marry *somebody* within six days: and the social difference between him and Susan would scarcely be greater than in the former case—though it was true that it would be all the other way. She had a thoroughly honest English face, and had been very kind to him. On the other hand he had written to his city friends in raptures about the Montmorenci's accomplishments. They had expressed their eagerness to hear her sing and play, and to see her exquisite sketches in oil. Then again there were her hands. The Montmorencis were famous for the whiteness of their hands, it seems, and Mademoiselle Bella's he had described as like the driven snow; whereas Susan's were like the snow that has been driven *over* for a few days in London. To be sure, as Mrs. Nokes she would have nothing to do but to wash them: and fortunately she could speak French like a native, or what would seem to his city friends, if not to his country neighbours (he had a villa near Egham called The Tamarisks), like a native. He certainly might do worse than marry Susan, and there seemed to be no opportunity for him, if he kept his word, of doing better. Then again, though he had confidence in her antecedents (so far as she was personally concerned), she would be certain to have dreadful relatives. He approached this subject with caution.

'Susan dear'—he thought he might commit himself so far, and it sounded pleasant—'Susan *dear*, what is your name?'

'Montem, sir: Susan Montem.'

He thought the name not so bad; it was half way to Montmorenci, though that did not much signify, if it was to become Nokes.

'Is your father alive?'

'No, sir.' Here the poor thing sighed. 'He is dead, sir.'

‘That’s bad,’ said my uncle, meaning just the contrary. ‘And your dear mother: she’s alive, I suppose?’

‘No, sir.’ Here she used the duster freely. ‘I am an orphan.’

‘That’s excellent,’ thought my uncle: but what he said was, ‘Poor dear! so am I.’ All was well so far; but it was almost certain that she would have brothers: probably gin-drinkers, certainly pipe-smokers, whom he would have to buy up, or who might even refuse to be bought up, and sisters who had married idle mechanics who had executions in their houses every quarter day. ‘Susan, how many brothers and sisters *have* you?’ enquired he, with desperation.

‘I have none, sir.’

He was so delighted that he was almost tempted—indeed, he did it: he kissed her. After that he felt that he had passed the Rubicon and burnt his boats behind him. ‘Now, Susan, I can bear to hear all about you.’

She had not much to tell. She had been left a foundling at Salthill Workhouse, near Eton, upon Montem day, and had consequently been surnamed Montem by the guardians. The curate of the place had been very kind to her, and when she grew up had recommended her as a servant to a lady friend of his: this lady had taken a fancy to her, and, discovering her abilities and high character, had made her her own maid, and taken her on a trip to Paris. She had put up at that very hotel, and unhappily died there.

‘I don’t wonder at *that!*’ interpolated my uncle.

Being thus rendered friendless—for her benefactor the curate was dead—and the people of the inn wanting a chambermaid, Susan had volunteered for the place, and had filled it ever since. It was a very simple story.

‘All that you have said is to your credit, Susan,’ said my uncle gravely. ‘That curate must have been a good soul and a judge of character. I really don’t think that I can do better—under the circumstances—than make you Mrs. Nokes. But there’s one thing about which I must caution you. I perceive that you are too soft-hearted, and it must be distinctly understood between us that you never attempt to intercede with me for my nephew Charles. You wouldn’t succeed, of course, but if I got fond of you, it would be annoying. When you become my wife, you will keep your carriage, and I confidently expect that you will behave as other people do in that station of life, and show no weakness in favour of your poor relations.’

Susan did not answer this directly, but promised in very

earnest and grateful tones to do her 'duty' as she called it, to my uncle in all respects, if it should please him to take so humble a personage as herself to wife.

'That's well said,' replied my uncle; 'you have pleased me already, my dear, in a good many ways;' and just as he was—well, if it had been the Montmorenci, one would have said, imprinting a salute upon her alabaster forehead—there suddenly appeared the French landlady.

'*Coquine abominable!*' cried she to Susan.

'That's true,' said my uncle, 'the cooking here *is* most abominable: but why does she come here to tell us so? What is she raving about, Susan?'

Susan did not quite like to say, for her mistress had mistaken the situation, and was giving her some very hard words in the French language. So she only answered, 'She is angry because I am not doing my work on the second floor.'

'Tell her,' cried my uncle, 'to go to—the ground floor.' Then, perceiving how matters stood, and that his Susan was suspected of levity, he added, 'Tell her that we are going to be married, that within the week you will be Mrs. Nathaniel Nokes.'

Then Susan, who was quite certain that the landlady would never believe *that*, informed her that my uncle was her father, who had suddenly recognised in her his long-lost child.

'Milor, I do congratulate you,' cried the landlady; 'Susan, you will never forget to recommend the hotel.'

My uncle kept his word; for before six days were over Susan was Mrs. Nokes. There are marriages of convenience, and there are marriages (or there used to be) of affection; I hardly know under which of these heads to place this particular union. Necessity did certainly in a manner dictate it; and the circumstances under which it took place were very ludicrous; but few marriages of romance have probably turned out half so well. So far as Clara and I were concerned, he might just as well have married the Montmorenci—as *we thought he had done*; for of course *we* did not hear from him to the contrary, nor had he had the moral courage to inform his friends that any change had been made in his matrimonial arrangements. They only knew that he was married, and took it for granted that it was to the high-born young woman to whom he had been engaged. My uncle was doubtless a great deal happier as it was. He used to say to himself at the office every day over the bottles, 'She's worth eight hundred dozen of the other one. There was something wrong about that Montmorenci vintage, for all its sparkle. Now, my *Susan's* all good; good the first day; good the second day; good

every day. She's like port, all the better for keeping; and she's not like port, because there's no crustiness about her. And she's no fool neither, though she don't play the piano and things.'

As a matter of fact, she was very clever, and had not been discovered by 'Society' in the neighbourhood of The Tamarisks to have been inferior in position to themselves. She always spoke French, which, though it was not good French, was a good deal better than that of her visitors, and that, of course, was her chief safeguard. My uncle had never boasted to his country neighbours of his bride's accomplishments: but he feared above everything the hour which should bring down to The Tamarisks those friends from the City who were always wanting to know when they were to have the pleasure of hearing her play and sing, and of seeing her beautiful sketches in oil.

Clara and I and Chickabiddy were by this time in a very disconsolate condition, and matters were going very hard with us. We were 'going under,' as the gradual sinking in the social scale is significantly termed, and for my part I had given up all hope of coming up again. But my wife was still of good heart. She had always clung to the notion that if she could only have got speech with my uncle she could have softened him towards us, while after his marriage she had actually believed it possible that an appeal to his newly married wife might prove successful. She had therefore written her a letter, which came back to us—not indeed unopened, as that to my uncle had done, because the recipient had not been forewarned against it—but without one word of reply.

After that experience it seemed to me mere midsummer madness to persevere, but Clara thought otherwise. 'I shall make a personal appeal to her, Charles, with Chickabiddy.' Her air was that of a general who summons his picked troops—the reserve—for a last charge: Napoleon at Waterloo calling up the old guards might have worn a similar expression of countenance. It was very touching to see her confidence in the attractions that this poor little wee thing (because it was all in all to *her*) would have for a stranger, but that did not prevent me from perceiving the hopelessness of it.

'My dear,' said I, 'never go with a baby to a woman who has not got one. We have heard, it is true, she is charitable' (for tidings to that effect had reached us from her country neighbours), 'but we are not the sort of poor to recommend ourselves to her charity. She will give you a ticket for her soup kitchen no doubt, but she won't recommend her husband to kill the fatted calf for his prodigal nephew, to provide us with mock-turtle. Her object will rather be to keep us out of her husband's sight; to persuade

him that she alone is the object he has to live for—and especially to die for. I dare say she has made him leave all his property to her by this time. Where there is a way, you may depend upon it there is a will, with a woman of that kind. My uncle's bride has been too highly placed to feel for folks in our position. We are a very humble pear—a mere baking-pear, as it were—while she is a jargonelle on the top of the tree.'

'Let us hope that she will be sweet and tender,' put in Clara, quietly. 'Beautiful we know she is, and accomplished.'

'Yes,' answered I, drily; 'I wish she never had been. If there was no further demand for Montmorencis in their native land, the supply should have ceased. I object to the surplus that has been imported into this country by the House of Nokes.'

However, it ended, as may be surmised, in my giving way to Clara, and in our all three going down to The Tamarisks; though Chickabiddy took my side of the argument, and protested against the proceeding throughout the journey.

We walked from the station to The Tamarisks, partly because we had no money to spare for a vehicle, and partly because I was glad to put off the dreaded interview as long as possible. It was our last chance, and though Clara called it (afterwards) a *coup d'état*, it seemed just then much more like a forlorn hope. At the garden gate we separated; my wife going straight up to the house door—for she had the courage of a lion, since she was about to do battle for her husband and child—while I remained in the laurels with Chickabiddy, who was to be sent for as a last resource. His appearance in the first instance would have excited suspicion; while the sight of *me* would have acted on my uncle like a red rag on a bull.

That I should be in a position to record what took place between Clara and my aunt-by-marriage is of course natural enough; but that I should have been able to set down what my uncle said to Susan at the Hotel of the Four Seasons may have seemed to verge on the domain of fiction. Before this little history is closed, however, it will be seen that the matter admits of an easy explanation. Similarly, it will be found that I do not draw on my imagination when I describe what went on between Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Nokes in their country house. They lived, I am bound to confess, most happily together. My uncle's conscience by no means troubled him as it ought to have done, considering his cruelty to me and mine; but it did prick him a little, which—combined with his unparalleled obstinacy—no doubt caused him to set his wife on her guard against us. The only bitter drop in his cup, however, was the terror with which he regarded

any incursion from his London friends, and their discovery of his having married beneath him. His neighbours had no suspicion of anything amiss. To hear his Susan talk broken English to the squire's wife was, he protested, as good as a play. But these country people, as he said, would believe anything; and London people believed nothing—only gave credit. Especially he feared three persons of his acquaintance, named Sponge, Rasper, and Robinson, 'all London born—but especially Rasper.'

The following conversation took place, as it happened, on the very morning of our visit. 'If they come down here, my darling,' said he, referring to this trio—'and they never *will*, if they wait for me to ask them—we must throw up the sponge. The game will be over. For my part, I shall never be able even to call you "Bella," before them; and as for you——'

'Well, it is true I am not so accomplished as the lady you intended to marry,' interrupted Susan; 'but still, you see, they *think* I am a born lady, and appearances do such a deal in this world.'

'Well, yes, I have noticed that in the wine trade. If you were to sell cider at eighty shillings a dozen, it would be considered uncommon good tippie by the customer who bought it. Tell them Madeira has been twice to China' (and here my uncle repeated 'twice to China!' with great unction), and how they smack their lips! And talking of appearances, Susan, that reminds me to warn you against another sort of appearances—the pretence and show of poverty. You must learn to steel your tender heart against *that*. Since my nephew's wife wrote you that begging letter——'

'Oh, sir, it was not a begging letter,' she interrupted.

'It *was*, Susan; why do you call me "sir"?'

'Because,' answered she, 'when you look so stern and talk so severely, you don't seem to be the good kind-hearted husband that I know you are. I'll keep my promise not to hold out my hand to your unfortunate nephew, but please don't let us talk about it. It makes me have less reverence and even less gratitude towards you, since your very generosity has made me the instrument of punishment and—as I feel—of wrong. I have been poor myself, and what must that poor young creature have thought of my never answering her touching letter?'

Touching letter! It's all nonsense. Oh Heavens, there's the front door-bell! Its Sponge, and Rasper, and Robinson, *I know*.'

It was an immense relief to my uncle when he found that it was only a lady who wished to see his wife, and he withdrew at once to smoke a cigar.

There would have been less smoke and more fire had he known who that lady was.

When Clara entered the drawing-room, she was at once favourably impressed with my aunt-by-marriage, who had a very gentle, if not a very refined expression of countenance, and received her kindly, and this determined her to throw herself upon her compassion at once.

‘I did not send in my name, madam, because I feared it would only prejudice you against your visitor. I am Charles’s—that is, your husband’s—niece by marriage. Not a near relation to yourself, you might say, if you wish to be unkind, which I do not think you do.’

‘Oh dear,’ said Mrs. Nokes, very much distressed, and quite forgetting her broken English, ‘but I do, ma’am. I wish to be as hard as a stone.’

‘The poor give you no such character, madam; and taking courage by their report, and being poor myself, and, alas, having been the innocent cause of making others poor, I have ventured hither.’

‘Madame, I am sorry,’ answered she, ‘but I have nothing for you. Mr. Noke, my hooseband, he tell me dat hees nephew is a very foolish, weeked——’

‘Not wicked,’ interposed Clara earnestly. ‘Foolish he may have been—nay, he *was*—to fall in love with a poor orphan like myself, who had nothing but her love to give him; but not wicked. He has a noble heart.’ [For one’s wife will say anything at a pinch.] ‘He has bent his proud spirit twice to entreat his uncle’s forgiveness; and in vain. And now I have come to appeal to *you*—a woman to a woman.’

Here my aunt-by-marriage began (as she afterwards confessed) ‘to melt like a tallow candle.’ My wife’s words had gone straight to her heart, and there was something in Clara’s look which moved her strangely.

‘I was a poor Berkshire curate’s daughter, madam——’

‘A *what*?’ screamed my aunt-by-marriage; then, recollecting herself, she continued, ‘a poor curé’s daughter, yas, in Berkshire—*qu’est ce que c’est* Berkshire?’

‘It is in the south of England, madam. We were poor, I say, and I had been used to straits even before my father’s death. But my husband has been accustomed to luxury and comforts, and now that poverty has come upon him——’

Here my aunt-by-marriage broke in with unaccountable emotion (and without attending to what had been said about *me* in the least) with, ‘Were you considered like your father?’

'Yes, madam, very like.'

'And his name?'

'Woodward, madam; he was curate of Salthill, near Eton.'

My poor Clara was never so near a fit in all her life as when my uncle's wife suddenly burst into tears, and, throwing herself at her feet, exclaimed: 'You are Miss Clara, and I am Susan—Susan Montem to whom he was so kind and noble. I am no more a Montmorenci than you are, nor half so much. I am a workhouse orphan, and—and—your aunt-by-marriage. Oh, what *can* I do to help you, what *can* I do?'

Just at this moment the front door-bell rang again, and this excellent lady (for lady she was at heart) had scarcely time to get on her feet when the servant entered to say that three gentlemen from London had called, and, since Mr. Nokes was not in the way, would be glad to pay their respects to Mrs. Nokes.

'In five minutes,' said Susan firmly, and dismissed him. Then in a few words she explained how matters stood, and what an ordeal awaited her; she had no hope, in her present nervous condition, of going through with it successfully, but she was resolved (such was her courage) to do her best. 'I can neither play, nor sing, nor sketch in oils,' said she, pointing despairingly to a piano and portfolio that stood in the room.

'But I *can*,' cried my wife, with a sudden flash of intelligence; 'these people have never seen either of us; let me take your place, and they will go away none the wiser.'

The next moment the three Cockneys were announced, and Clara gave them a gracious welcome, at the same time introducing Susan as a French friend of hers. It was the boldest stroke that ever was played—even by a woman for her husband and child; but it succeeded. Susan spoke French, which they did not understand. Clara spoke broken English interspersed with snatches of French, which they understood a little (because she was not much of a French scholar), and therefore they appreciated it all the more. Apologising for her husband's absence, she volunteered to do her best to entertain them with a little music. Her hands were white enough even for a Montmorenci, and Susan kept on her gloves (she always did so, because it was the custom of the Montmorencis—'something hereditary,' my Uncle used to explain, 'like the Banshee'). My wife exhibited the contents of the portfolio, and even drew a little sketch. The whole trio were in raptures. Sponge afterwards observed to my Uncle that there was 'nothing like blood,' and that he would have known his lady 'to have been a Montmorenci' though he had met her on the top of an omnibus. Even Rasper, London-born as he was, had no suspicion about the

genuineness of the Montmorenci, and presently retired to his birth-place with his friends, thoroughly satisfied and befooled.

In the mean time my uncle had shut himself up in his study (as it was called) with a bottle of champagne, too terrified to put in an appearance; as soon as the carriage wheels of his visitors had rolled away he rushed into the drawing-room.

'It is all over, I suppose?' said he, with an air of desperation; 'of course they found you out, my poor Susan?' Then, all of a sudden, he saw my wife, and stammered, 'I mean Bella.'

'Nothing has been found out,' said Susan, 'thanks to this dear lady, who knows all.' Then she described how Clara had personated her, and what a complete success it had been. My uncle almost went down on his knees to thank my wife; 'I don't know who you are,' said he, 'but I shall never be happy till I have shown my gratitude to you.'

'Nathaniel,' said my aunt-by-marriage, gravely, 'this lady is the daughter of my benefactor Mr. Woodward, to whom I owed everything on earth till I met you.'

'Then I am most uncommonly glad to see you under this roof,' said my uncle with enthusiasm, perhaps a little assisted by the champagne. 'She doesn't look very prosperous, Susan,' he added in a whisper, 'but if there is anything that money can do, it shall be done.'

'She is poor, sir, and much in need of friends,' said Susan.

'Then you have found them here, ma'am,' said my uncle (who, it must be understood, had finished the whole bottle). 'You are a fixture at The Tamarisks for life, if it so pleases you.'

'You are most kind, sir,' said Clara, softly; 'but I have a husband and one *little* child.'

'Never mind, ma'am, he'll grow. There's plenty of room for him to do it at The Tamarisks. Where are they? What! in the garden? Call them in!'

Then Clara went to the window and called out for me and Chickabiddy; and this was the most terrible moment of it all.

When my uncle saw me he cried, 'You young scoundrel! how dare you show your face in this house?'

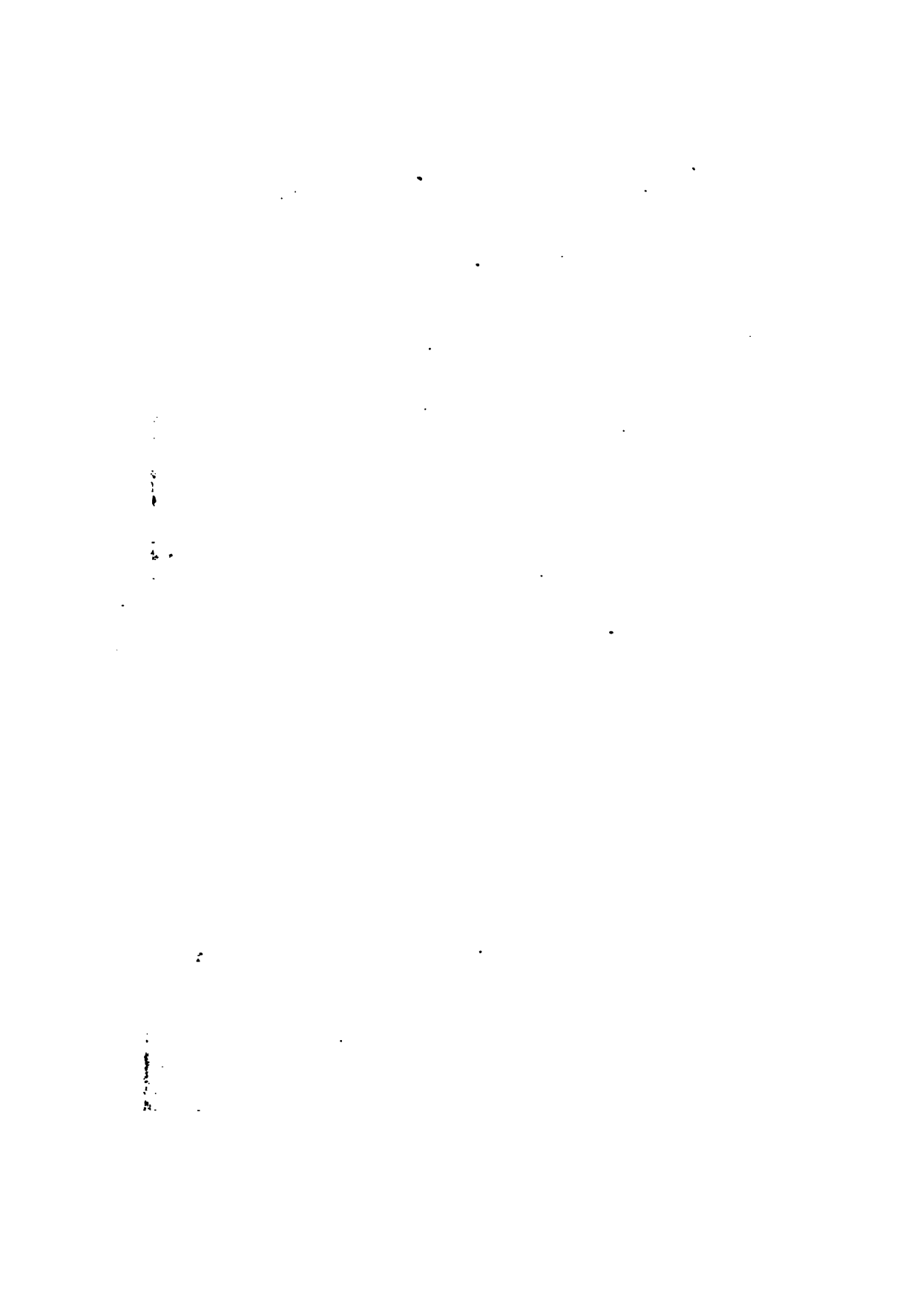
'Because you have just sent for him,' interposed my wife. 'Charles is my husband, and that is our Chickabiddy. You have promised to make your house our home, and I know you are a man of your word.'

It was a stroke of genius to put the thing upon *that* ground.

'This is all *your* fault, Susan,' cried my uncle petulantly. 'You promised never to interfere on behalf of this—this young couple.'



LOST!



‘Nor did I, my dear husband. You have done it all yourself.’

‘It was the champagne,’ exclaimed my uncle naïvely. ‘What a fool I have been, knowing, as I do so well, what champagne is made of.’ Then he turned to me, and said, ‘Well, sir, if you have regained your place here, it is all through your aunt’s good graces.’

‘We shall never forget her kindness, sir,’ said we, both together.

And I trust we never shall. She is only an aunt-by-marriage, but she has behaved like a sister to my wife, and like a mother to our child. If she had really been a Montmorenci, she could not have shown more nobility of nature; and it is even just possible that she might have shown a little less.¹

¹ This story, in a dramatised form, was produced at the Court Theatre in September last, under the title of ‘The Substitute.’

Lost.

On, winds, blow fair! Oh, winds,
blow free!

The port we steer for is under our lee,
And crisp waves curl on the clear
green sea.

Home from exile, dear love, we sail,
Our ship speeds forward with favour-
ing gale,—
See where the cliffs loom sombre and
pale.

Running so freely—our haven near,
But little for tempest and storm we
fear,
And life to each was never so dear.

Ah! how weird is the sea-bird’s
cry,
How mournful and shrill is the wild
wind’s sigh,
While white waves glance from our
bulwarks high.

Stern the frown on the skipper’s face,
The wind and the waves have risen
pace,
And across the sky the storm-clouds
race.

Hard down the helm! The black
rocks show
Where the reef runs out so narrow
and low,
Like jaws of hell ‘mid the billows’
snow.

Put her about! Too late, alas!
The strong ship shivers like fragile
glass,
And hissing waves through her tim-
bers pass.

Oling to me, love! My life for thine!
Round your slender waist this stout
cord I’ll twine,
And so shall your fate be bound to
mine.

Trust to me, darling! My strong hand
Shall bear you unharmed to the storm-
ridged strand,
Nor shall loose its grasp till we touch
land.

Bruised, wave-beaten, we gained the
bay,—
My life was left, but my one treasure lay
Lost, in my arms, for ever and aye.

From Dreams to Waking.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

CHAPTER X.

WAR.

GRAZIELLA was a young lady with theories somewhat in advance of her experience. And one of these theories was, that no girl should show her lover, no woman her husband, how much she cared for him. Men, according to her, should be always kept in the attitude of expectant supplication, of submissive adoration, with a wholesome fear of consequences should they dare to relax; and to make them sure of their holding was to destroy what was most valuable in their love, namely, their sense of insecurity, with the means to be taken to win better terms for themselves.

‘If you are kind to them one day, you should be cool the next. It is so good to tantalize them!’ she said one day to Venetia with an air of profound wisdom. ‘Nothing can be so stupid as to show any man how much you love him, or to let him think that he is dearer to you than you are to him. We should be always queens—never slaves! And that is my advice to you, Venny, if ever you are engaged; unless you want to be unhappy and lose your lover by too much love.’

In pursuance of which theory Graziella, now that the early days of enchantment were over and the halcyon seas disturbed, set herself with deliberation to show Ernest Pierrepont that he was not secure, and that if she chose she could, and if he did not mind what he was about she would. And the rod with which she ruled him was his jealousy of Charley Mossman on the one side, and her jealousy of Venetia on the other. If he paid ordinary attention to Venetia, and sometimes more than ordinary in spite of all the girl’s own endeavours to prevent it, she flirted with Charley Mossman; and the more her lover showed annoyance, the more she gave him cause. She had no great difficulty in this, for Charley was, as we have said, a soft kind of person where women were concerned, and far too simply honest, for his own part, to suspect the dishonesty of others. Though Ernest’s love was as sacred to him as any other man’s would have been—which is saying everything—still, if a beautiful little creature shows you

that she likes you better than her own assigned particular he, what can you do? he used to think, with mingled pleasure and discomfort, when Graziella played off her sweetest airs on him and gave him to understand that she thought him far nicer than Ernest, and wished—what? He was made to feel as if in a mill, good, honest, stupid fellow, where he was hammered on by conflicting feelings, and turned round by bewildering influences, till he was dizzy and did not know his own footing.

The whole thing indeed was a vicious circle. Charley's facility for victimization made Graziella more and more determined to keep him as a make-weight against Ernest's roving propensities; Ernest, inflamed with jealousy and inflated with vanity, drew off to Venetia in part for consolation, in part for revenge—not doubting that he had only to beckon to his past love, to be reinstated in his old place and have all his old privileges restored. Graziella, on her side, inflamed with jealousy and inflated with vanity, flirted with Charley still more audaciously as a set-off, and quarrelled with Ernest still more bitterly as a punishment; and then both appealed to the harassed common friend, and each demanded her candid opinion;—which meant her unqualified approval and unshared sympathy. Uncertain what to do, and unable to say what she knew, she took refuge in silence, by which she offended both, and got from each just as much blame as if she had taken the other side outright. It was, in truth, a miserable time of turmoil and distress; and her only pleasure was when Ernest and Graziella, reconciled after an outbreak, went away out of sight and hearing altogether, and she was left alone, or with Colonel Camperdown and his sister Emily—almost as often now at Oak-tree House as Ernest or Charley Mossman.

Here, at least, were no love-makings and no jealousies, no quarrellings and no excited reconciliations, but only quiet friendship and peaceful meetings;—Harold standing to her as her brother, or rather as a nineteenth century impersonation of Great-Heart, while good, plain, affectionate Emily, if less an object of idealizing worship than fairy-like and fascinating Graziella, was infinitely more satisfactory as a sisterly kind of friend. Harold too, though his conversation was divested of all dazzling attributes, though he neither sang nor talked art, nor yet rolled out misty phrases of glittering nonsense, was so solid, so strong, so eminently manly and trustworthy, that Venetia was beginning to think that perhaps these were qualities more to the purpose in life than poetical charm, and that, man with man, Colonel Camperdown was the one most worthy of respect of any whom she knew.

'I wish that he had been my brother,' she one day said to

herself with a sigh. 'He would not have let me get into all my trouble if he had been. Only I think he judges poor Mr. Pierre-point a little harshly!' put in her generous, tender self, woman-like unable to condemn as he deserved the man who had won her first young love—though he had flung it aside when he had got it, as if it had been of no more value than a bit of *bric-à-brac*, a cracked china tea-cup, say, or a *bonbonnière* of Battersea enamel. But the true woman, God bless her! is forgiving; and Venetia was essentially the true woman.

'Which do you like the best?' asked Graziella of Ernest one day, after they had made up a tremendous quarrel about nothing in the world that anyone could understand, and Venetia had been the peacemaker.

'The best of what?' he answered.

'Angels or demons?' she said, levelling her beautiful eyes at him. 'For myself, I think that angels are a little insipid; don't you? They are very sweet and all that, but a trifle too sugary for my taste.'

'What am I expected to say?' returned Ernest, smiling as if he read nothing of her secret meaning and was really occupied only with the question as put. 'If I say demons, where do I place you? But you have given your verdict against the angels; and truly you are not one of the insipid kind that you have described.'

'No,' said Graziella quietly, 'I am not an angel. Venny is, if you like; but I am not.'

'Are you a demon, then?' he returned, his handsome eyes laughing into hers.

'You would say so,' she said, smiling back into his. 'You think worse of me than anyone in the world has ever done,' with a delicious little look—one of those looks which challenge a man's profoundest adulation. 'I know quite well that I am a demon, a horrid little demon, in your eyes, Ernest!'

'So? who told you this?' he asked, still smiling.

'Yourself,' said Graziella. 'You admire Venny too much to admire me. Tell me, Ernest dear,' putting on a pretty, matter-of-fact, but yet wholly sincere and interested air, 'why did you not marry Venetia Greville?'

'Because of Graziella Despues,' he answered, forgetting at the moment how often and how solemnly he had sworn that he had never had any other feeling for the 'poor little thing' than one of the most tepid and subdued admiration, and that there had never been even the ghost of what is called 'love-making' between them.

'And if I had not come?' she said caressingly, her hands

clasped on his arm and her eyes looking up into his. 'You would have married her then?'

'Yes,' he answered, kissing her hand. 'Think what I should have missed!'

'Oh, you are bound to say that now!' said Graziella a little coldly. She unclasped her hands and withdrew her eyes. 'Of course you cannot tell me to my face that you would rather have married some other girl, but I dare say you feel in your heart that you would.'

'I dare say I do not,' he answered with a greater show of patience than he felt; for her perpetual uneasiness of temper was trying him more than he cared to own just yet to himself. He liked a little of it. It excited him, gave colour to his life and kept his love alive; but there is a world of difference between swimming and drowning, and just now he felt drowning rather than swimming.

'Poor, dear Venetia! I am sure I am very sorry that I ever came to stand in her way like this!' Graziella went on to say with great compassion, admirably put on. 'If I had known that you were in love with her, Ernest, I would have gone back to school at once, instead of staying here to make her miserable. I am very sorry for it all—I am sure I am!'

'It is rather late in the day for remorse, my darling,' said Ernest drily; 'and I do not think that you have learnt anything more now than what you knew before.'

'That means that I tell stories!' said Graziella. 'I am very much obliged to you, Ernest! It is not often that girls hear such things from gentlemen! It is a new experience at all events,' with a short laugh, rising from the seat under the horse-chestnut where so much of their love-making and bickering was transacted.

'Good God! Graziella, what has come to you of late!' cried Ernest. 'You seem possessed by the determination to make me miserable! I cannot please you now, do what I may, and you only seek occasion for quarrelling with me. What does it all mean? Tell me only what you want me to do, or not to do, and I will do anything you like—be anything to please you. Let us understand each other, in heaven's name, for this kind of thing cannot go on!'

'If you want to break off our engagement, say so, Ernest,' said Graziella; 'but don't try to throw the blame on me.'

'I think it is you who want to break it off,' retorted Ernest uncomfortably.

'Oh! I would never ask any man to keep to me who did not wish it himself,' said Graziella, tossing her little head. 'If you are

tired of me you have only to say so, and you will not find me so very anxious to keep to you!’

‘You are unjust, Graziella,’ said Ernest.

‘And you are cruel,’ answered Graziella.

Which, by-the-by, he was not; but it is a safe and easy accusation to make against a lover, and one that comes quite naturally to a woman when she is in the wrong.

At this moment Charley Mossman rode up to the door, and Graziella saw him. So did Ernest.

‘I am going in to dear Venny,’ she said suddenly.

Ernest lounged up from the seat.

‘Yes,’ he said affectedly; ‘let us go in and see dear Venny. She is always so sweet and tranquil—like a moonlight evening in July!’

‘After a storm, I suppose?’ Graziella returned.

‘After a storm,’ said Ernest.

‘I see Mr. Mossman; what a nice, dear fellow he is!’ the Creole said with as much affectation as her lover; ‘so sweet-tempered and honest and faithful—a man that one can trust so thoroughly—a man that would never pretend the same thing to two girls at once, and that would be constant and amiable for life. He and Venny would make such a splendid couple! Don’t you think so?’

‘Indeed yes!’ yawned Ernest; ‘an ideal couple; both fair, tall, good-natured, and moonlight-coloured.’

‘Or Venny and that handsome Colonel Camperdown?’ returned the Creole, seeing that her former harpoon had not struck.

The man’s pale face flamed. He could afford to accept the suggestion which gave Venetia to Charley, whom he despised as the shifty and clever despise the honest and obtuse; but he could not pretend indifference to the chances of Harold Camperdown whom he hated because he feared, and by whom he knew himself to be gauged and measured.

‘I do not think you show yourself very careful for your friend’s happiness in making such a choice as this for her,’ he said loftily; but it was a loftiness which it was not very difficult to see through. ‘Of all men living I think Colonel Camperdown the least fit to take care of such a woman as Miss Greville.’

‘Why?’ asked Graziella, always walking towards the house. ‘What have you against him? I am sure he is most delightful when he chooses—much more delightful than you, Ernest, when you are in one of your odious tempers—like to-day.’

‘You would like me to say the same thing of Miss Greville to you, would you not?’ flared out Ernest hotly.

‘I should like you to be sincere enough to be able to say it,’ she answered coolly.

Which last amenity brought her to the drawing-room window, standing open to the lawn. Passing through with her pretty gliding step she went in, saying ‘Venny dear!’ to stop confusedly and add ‘Oh, Mr. Mossman, you here!’ as if his being there was a thing both unknown to her, and of supreme importance—something to make her blush and hesitate, look shyly down and then look shyly up; in short, put on all the airs of pretty consciousness, by which young women let men know their power and learn that they are dangerously dear.

Whereupon Ernest, going up to Venetia, said in his most dulcet tones, but loud enough to be heard by all present :

‘Gracie and I,’ familiarly, ‘have been talking of you, Miss Greville,’ respectfully. ‘We have been comparing you to the sweet restfulness of a moonlight night in July, and have both agreed to consider you an angel.’

‘And you know what that means, Venny—you who know Mr. Pierrepont so well—that I, poor me, am just the reverse of an angel!’ lisped Graziella. ‘Mr. Mossman,’ turning to Charley, still keeping her air of bashful consciousness, but speaking as if trying to conquer her confession of his dangerous dearness, ‘don’t you think I must be very good-natured to let Mr. Pierrepont say such things to me? For, after all, though I am very, very, very fond of dear Venny, can it be pleasant to hear oneself called a little demon and one’s friend praised as an angel?’ pouting.

‘It is a bad kind of joke,’ said Charley flushing. ‘For myself, I hate such things even in jest.’

‘Dear old boy!’ said Ernest with a fine shade of contempt penetrating his pretended affection. ‘Always the same honest heart—a little verdant perhaps, but always honest!’

‘Better be green than—’ Charley was going to say ‘bad,’ but he stopped himself. It was rather too big a stone to fling at the head of his *quondam* Pylades; and after all he had no business to put his fingers into the love-pie that was smoking before him. If he did he must expect to get them burnt; and burnt fingers are not so pleasant as singed wings, all things considered. The pain is the same, and the process less desirable.

‘What does it all mean?’ Charley asked of Venetia anxiously, when they were alone. ‘Are not things going well between those two?’

‘Not very,’ said Venetia steadily, though it was painful to her, for many reasons, to have to confess this.

‘Whose fault is it?’ he asked.

‘Both,’ she said.

‘His I can quite believe,’ flashed out Charley with supreme disdain, ‘but hers?’

‘Yes, hers as well as his. She tries him fearfully by her jealousy and exactingness, and he tries her by his want of sincerity. And they both’—here she blushed crimson—‘they both flirt; one as much as the other.’

It was Charley’s turn to blush now.

‘Ah!’ he said with a deep breath, ‘then it is only flirting?’

‘Only,’ returned Venetia, looking at him kindly. ‘So do not be deceived, Mr. Mossman. Graziella loves Mr. Pierrepont as well as she can love anything, but she is fond of admiration, and does not always think; she would not break off her engagement with Ernest for any man in the world—that I am sure of; and she will only make anyone else unhappy who believes that she will.’

‘Is that meant as a warning?’ asked Charley.

‘Yes,’ she answered.

‘Thank you,’ he said. ‘You have done me a great service; for she is fascinating.’

Venetia’s eyes filled with tears.

‘Ah! I know that!’ she said tenderly; ‘but, for all her fascination, she is not to be trusted. I know her now; I never did before; but I have been obliged to confess to myself, sorrowfully enough, that she has not as much truth or heart as I once thought she had.’

‘At any rate,’ said Charley viciously, ‘whatever she may be, she is good enough, and too good, for Ernest Pierrepont.’

‘So she may be,’ said Venetia; ‘but’—her first essay in intentional match-making—‘not half so good as Emily Backhouse. What a darling Emily is! I have found her out lately. I never knew her before.’

‘Yes, Emily Backhouse is very good,’ said Charley with affectionate indifference; ‘as good a girl as ever lived. But she has not Miss Despues’ charm.’

‘She has something better,’ returned Venetia, and then the conversation dropped; but, from this time, Charley Mossman put Graziella out of his thoughts, and decided within himself against both burnt fingers and singed wings, and the folly of giving way to fancies, because a pretty little person had lovely eyes and a bewildering way of using them.

So things dragged on, wearily and uncomfortably enough for every one. Graziella could not go back to school because of the infection still lingering in the house; she had no relations in *England*, no connections of any kind, and no place of asylum possible,

until her guardian should return from abroad. Hence, being here, it was only common humanity to keep her; and, though day by day, as Venetia's eyes were being more thoroughly opened to the true characters of her former ideal and her worshipped little queen alike—and with this increase of knowledge a corresponding decrease of love and esteem for both—still she had to make the best of things as they were, and to steer her way among the shallows deftly. She had to conceal from Graziella, so far as she could in honesty, how radically she was changing in feeling for her, and, while bearing frank testimony, when called on to do so, against her various misdemeanours, to avoid anything that looked like partisanship with Ernest. And she had to make Ernest understand that when she took part against him it was not pique, and when for him it was not love. It was a difficult position all through, but gentleness and sincerity generally guide us safely enough in moments of difficulty;—as Venetia found now. She said her say when she had to be frank, but she said it gently and had no scene in consequence; for Graziella, with all her jealousy and suspicion, could not accuse her of trying to win back Ernest, whatever she might say to him of his endeavours to win back her; and the gradual cooling of her love for Graziella, as well as her better knowledge of Ernest, came about so gradually, and so naturally, that neither could find the moment when to turn against her, and accuse her, the one of inconstancy, the other of changed respect.

And always, while matters grew worse and feelings more complicated, and the disputes between the lovers more frequent in occurrence and more embittered in tone, Colonel Camperdown became of greater use and more comforting assurance to Venetia. She carried her troubles to him, and he helped her as men of good sense and experience can help women who will consent to be guided. But, if it made the present easy, it was endangering the future; and more than once Venetia said to herself, with a kind of terror which she could not control:

‘What will become of me when he goes back to India?’

CHAPTER XI.

PEACE.

ONE day Ernest and Graziella, who had been going ill for some time now, came to the worst of the bad places through which they had as yet journeyed. They had a quarrel which threw all the rest into the shade for the wild words spoken, and the injustice and insanity of the accusations flung broadcast on both sides. It began on the old theme—Graziella's jealousy of Venetia;

which was not without cause so far as Ernest was concerned, though entirely baseless on this occasion, as on all others, so far as related to Venetia. She was too loyal for the one part, and too much out of love for the other, to interfere with them in any way; but that did not hinder the Creole from cherishing her suspicions like certainties, and making both her lover and herself miserable in consequence. She still maintained in spite of everything that Ernest made love to Venetia—which was true; and that Venetia encouraged him—which was not true, but which did quite as well for a weapon of accusation as if it had been.

From quarrelling about Venetia, and that which was and that which was not, they drifted into general accusations of the manifold sins and wickednesses which each discerned in the other, and the various misdemeanours that characterized the dealings of both. Each lost temper, dignity, and good-breeding; and those bitter things were said which, when once uttered, are never wholly forgotten—things which people may pretend or even wish to forget and forgive, but which at the best are like weeds that are buried only skin deep, to come to the surface on the slightest stirring of the soil.

At last said Graziella, flinging herself aside:

‘I hate you, Ernest! you are a deceitful wretch, and you know it! I have lost all my love for you, and I do not believe a word you say. I never want to see you again; never!’

‘I should be sorry to go against your wishes, Miss Despues,’ said Ernest, suddenly calmed into formal politeness. He rose from the seat, took off his hat, and bowed with the stateliness of a Sir Charles Grandison preparing to dance a minuet. ‘After this I suppose you have nothing else to say?’ he continued.

‘Nothing,’ said Graziella defiantly.

‘Then I have the honour to bid you farewell,’ said Ernest, with another bow more horribly polite and formal than even the last, as he turned away and left the fragments of their little house of cards scattered on the ground—scattered so that surely they would never be gathered together and made into a habitable mansion again!

Graziella stood with her back turned towards him, not thinking that he would carry out his threat of leaving her—not expecting that he would accept his dismissal even though she had given it. She gave herself credit for more power, and believed more entirely in his subjection. When she heard the lodge gates swing to, and knew that he had gone, she dashed into the house in a tempest of angry despair, and, flinging herself on the ground at Venetia’s feet, burst into a torrent of tears.

‘What is it now, Gracie?’ asked Venetia with a little sigh of weariness mixed with her compassion. She knew very well that, whatever the momentary form, the thing would be the same as so often before—fighting because of shadows, but fighting with real weapons and dealing cruel blows though the cause was only shadows.

‘I have quarrelled with Ernest for good and all!’ sobbed Graziella. ‘Oh, Venny, he has said the most awful things to me that you can imagine! He is a wretch and I hate him, and hope that I shall never see him again.’

‘If you think him such a wretch, and are so glad to get rid of him, you ought not to cry like this,’ said Venetia gravely. ‘But what has he done that you should say you hate him? Has he only been in fault, Gracie?’

‘There, that is just like you, Venetia! You go and take his part at once without knowing anything. Of course you do!’ cried Graziella, her eyes flashing through their tears. ‘I knew that you would when I came to you. I have no one in the world to take my part—no one! No father or mother here, and you don’t care for me any more. You only care to defend Ernest!’

And then she buried her face in Venetia’s lap again, and sobbed against the knees of the one whom she had just been accusing of unfriendliness and partiality.

‘Is that fair, Gracie dear?’ asked Venetia’s sweet voice tenderly. ‘Have I ever been anything but a true friend to you through it all? You know that I have been your friend, and you should not accuse me of taking his part against you. It is not true.’

‘Forgive me, dear, good Venny!’ cried Graziella, softening as suddenly, as inexplicably, as she had raged before. She took Venetia’s fair, cool hands and laid them on her forehead. ‘Feel how it is burning!’ she said piteously. ‘Oh, Venny, I am so miserable! I am almost out of my mind, and scarcely know what to do or say. Only help me, dear, out of this trouble. It is the worst I have ever been in, and you are my only friend—the only one I have in the world!’ weeping afresh.

‘But what has happened, dear?’ said Venetia. ‘I will help you if I can—you may be sure of that; but how can I if I know nothing? Tell all, and let me see what I can do.’

‘I have had a frightful quarrel with Ernest, and we have separated, and bid each other good-bye for ever,’ said Graziella. ‘I told you!’ a little crossly; ‘and I can tell you no more if I were to talk till to-morrow.’

‘And what do you want now?’ Venetia asked. ‘Do you want to separate from him or to make it up?’

‘I want him to make it up,’ said Graziella with emphasis. ‘I

want him to make an apology. He ought, for he said such dreadful things to me; you never heard such things, Venny!’

‘And you, Gracie, to him—what? Ah, little dear! I am afraid you had your full share!’

‘But then I am the girl, and have the right,’ said Graziella quickly. ‘That is different.’

‘I don’t quite see that,’ said Venetia. ‘Being the girl does not make wrong right; and if you have said what you should not, you are as much to blame as he is.’

‘Oh, of course! of course! anything to screen Ernest!’ cried Graziella, lifting her head.

‘Now, Graziella, understand once for all there must be an end to this,’ said Venetia with sudden sternness. ‘If I am to help you, you must have some kind of trust in me. I will do all for you that I can; but how can I do anything if you go on thinking that I am unjust to you, and care only for Mr. Pierrepont? You know that I did care for him once very much; I can never care for anyone else, I think, as much as I did for him.’ Here her voice faltered and her mild eyes filled with tears, but more from the remembrance of what she had suffered than from any active suffering now. It was regret for what had been, not for what was. After a moment she was calm and unmoved again. ‘But you know in your heart, Gracie,’ she went on to say, ‘that never—never once since your engagement have I tried to win a single look from him; and that I have honestly done my best to kill both my love and my disappointment—and that I have succeeded.’ This last she said with emphasis.

Her manner, her look, her tone all sobered and overawed the little Creole. It was not often that Venetia asserted herself in this way; when she did, she produced all the more effect. Graziella lowered her eyes, ashamed. ‘Yes, I know all that, Venny,’ she said in a rather humble voice; ‘but, all the same, I am sure that he loves you better than me, and that he regrets his choice of me instead of you. I am as certain of this as of my own existence.’

‘Oh, Gracie, your jealousy will ruin your life!’ cried Venetia. ‘Do have some trust. Mr. Pierrepont does not love me; he does love you; and I do not love him any longer. What more can you want? You knew everything when you accepted him—all there was to know, that is, which was not much. Why cannot you be content? Life is impossible with such constant jealousy and suspicions.’

Graziella looked up.

‘Well, I will trust you!’ she said, with what was to her fiery, narrow, selfish little soul a burst of generous magnanimity. ‘Only bring him to his senses, Venny, and make him apologize.’

‘And if this quarrel is got over, will you promise to try and keep peace?’ cried Venetia. ‘You might be so happy together, you two—made for each other as you are—if only you would leave off this dreadful quarrelling. I cannot understand it, Gracie. It would simply kill me; I could not bear it for a day.’

‘I *will* try to be good,’ said Graziella. ‘If I get over this, I promise you I will not quarrel any more. Only make us friends again—but make him apologize.’

‘You promise, Gracie?’

‘Yes, I promise.’

‘Faithfully?’

‘Faithfully.’

‘That’s my own darling little queen once more!’ cried Venetia, kissing her tenderly with a burst of her old enthusiasm. ‘All will come right in the end, dear, if you will but keep your word. And now trust me; I will do what I can for you, darling; and you will be good and wise, and leave off all jealousies and suspicions, will you not?’

‘Yes,’ said Graziella; ‘I will.’

And at the moment she really meant what she said.

On which Venetia sat down and wrote a pretty little note to Ernest, saying that she and Graziella would be at the old mill to-morrow morning, and that they would be so glad if he would go too, as both (underlined) wanted to speak to him. He was to be sure and not say no, as this was the first time that she, Venetia, had asked a favour of him, and she would be dreadfully hurt if he refused.

When Ernest got the note he read it over three times.

‘What a lovely handwriting!’ he said to himself, examining every letter critically; ‘just like herself all through!’ He kissed the paper lightly. ‘What a fool I have been!’ he said half aloud; ‘I threw away the gold for—what? Something that is certainly *not* gold!’

So Nemesis was working at last. She is seldom long idle.

It was an awkward meeting the next day, when the tryst was kept in the wood by the old mill; and the place which had once been poor Venetia’s temple of happiness and hope was transferred to the service of repairing the damage done to the loves of Ernest and Graziella. But Venetia had chosen this place purposely, as the most complete assurance possible to her to give to both—to him that she had shut him out of her heart finally and for ever; to her that she had not preserved even so much romance as makes a woman care to keep the memory of her dream sacred. All the

same, it was awkward to her as to him; and she coloured, and could not meet his eyes quite so frankly as she wished.

Graziella, whose good resolutions were never of long continuance, was a little sulky to begin with; and Venetia's blush and somewhat conscious face set the jealous blood in a flame, that did not look much like peace to come; and Ernest, who was recognizing more and more clearly his mistake, and whose vagrant fancy had flown back again to the calmness of the moonlight in preference to the fervent heat of the tropics, was not ashamed to confess to himself that to meet Venetia once more by the old mill was rather the inducement of the day than a reconciliation with Graziella; nor was he afraid to recognize in his deepest self that this reconciliation would be of no avail, and that his dream too was over. Whereby it came about that his eyes looked lovingly at Venetia and coldly at Graziella, and that the accent—that unmistakable accent—of truth was in his voice for the former, and not for the latter, when he greeted both and expressed his pleasure at seeing them.

After a few halting, hesitating phrases, everyone playing at pretence—even Venetia, soul of truth as she was, unable to speak straight to the point, and feeling a revulsion against her former idol for his disloyalty to the one whom he had chosen to supplant her, such as she had never felt before; indignant with him, humiliated in herself, sorry for Graziella, but, girl-like, feeling also the tremendous sacredness of an engagement, and that now they were engaged they must make the best of it—taking Graziella's hand in hers, she said:

‘Now, Gracie dear, I am going to leave you for a little while. You will remember all that you have promised me, will you not, little dear? You might be so happy if you chose!’

‘If Miss Despues would but be guided by you, Miss Greville!’ said Ernest, with the tenderest accent—the most respectful air.

‘Her own good sense and good heart will guide her better than I can,’ returned Venetia coldly, and with a look of reproach.

‘Mr. Pierrepont does not think so!’ cried Graziella spitefully. Venetia held up her hand.

‘Now, Gracie,’ she said affectionately but gravely too, ‘your promise, remember! Mr. Pierrepont means nothing but what everyone says of a cool-headed bystander. So do not make small things into great ones; and good-bye, darling, till I see you again; which will be in about an hour's time.’

She kissed her, and by an effort looked at Ernest, then turned and left them, walking quickly down the path that led deeper into the wood. For an instant Ernest stood balanced to follow her—his heart, or that thing in him which did duty for a heart, given

back to her again; then he remembered his position and its obligations; but Graziella had read him, and the reconciliation that was to be began by her saying in a mocking tone of voice:

‘Well, Mr. Pierrepont, why do you not run after her?’

Walking rapidly along the path, Venetia came down to the part of the river which was crossed by the little wooden bridge that formed one of the most picturesque points in the wood. Standing on the bridge was a man fishing; and Venetia felt a sudden inrush of peace, and the sentiment of protection against even herself, as a second glance showed her that it was Harold Camperdown at his old sport.

How strangely like, and yet unlike, were the circumstances of this autumn day with those of the early summer, when he had come upon the three sketching the old mill, and had given Venetia the hidden warning, the concealed counsel, which then she had rejected as false in fact and cruel in spirit! What a dream it all seemed now! What a queer, unsubstantial bit of glamour! Much as she had suffered, she felt glad now that it was all over, and that the truth being what it was, she had learnt it before too late. She had never felt so keenly the worthlessness of Ernest’s character as she did to-day. Even the special quality of his beauty had lost its charm for her; and the light figure, with the pale face, poetic eyes, long, dark hair, and make-up generally of a gentlemanlike artist, all at once became factitious and unbeautiful when compared with the rougher, stronger manliness of the fisherman on the bridge turning his kind, brave face to where she stood among the trees, and smiling with unaffected gladness as he saw her.

He drew in his line, left the bridge, and came up to her.

‘How is this?’ he said, shaking hands with her kindly. ‘Alone? Where is your companion?’

‘I left her at the mill with Mr. Pierrepont,’ said Venetia. ‘They had their own affairs to settle, so I came away.’

‘Their own affairs seem very often unsettled,’ said Harold with a quick look into her face; ‘I have seldom seen a love-affair so eminently unsatisfactory. They never seem to be in accord, and of the two I do not know which to pity most, though I cannot say that I respect either.’

‘I am so sorry for them!’ sighed Venetia. ‘It makes me absolutely miserable to see all their wretchedness, and to know that it is self-made, and might be avoided if they would.’

‘And you would undo the engagement if you could, I suppose?’ Harold asked, looking down and speaking with a manifest effort to appear unconcerned.

‘Oh, no!’ cried Venetia; ‘undo it?—no! They will come all

right after a time. It is only that they do not always understand each other. And then they are both impatient.'

'And both give cause of impatience?' said Harold.

'Too much,' she answered with her tender frankness; adding again, 'but it will come right after a time,' as the charm by which all difficulties were to be smoothed away.

'You know my opinion of him,' said Harold; 'I need not repeat it.'

'Yes, I know it,' said Venetia nervously.

'And you think me wrong?'

Again he looked into her face, searching it. There were some things of which he would be glad to be assured to-day; some things of which he had made up his mind to be assured before long, and the present seemed to him the manifest moment.

'You think me wrong?' he repeated.

'I think you—' she hesitated.

'Hard, perhaps?'

'A little.'

'Unjust?'

'No; not exactly unjust; but do not be angry with me, Colonel Camperdown—a little unmerciful!'

'Does such a man deserve mercy?' he said with bitterness.

'We all do,' she answered tenderly. 'Which of us is faultless?'

'You, if anyone!' he cried, with a strange expression on his face—the look of a man who dare not show what he feels.

Venetia shrank back and turned pale.

'Please do not flatter me,' she said. 'That is not like you, Colonel Camperdown, and I have had enough flattery to last my life.'

'You are right,' he answered gravely. 'I suppose, being a woman, you have your faults like anyone else; but what I mean is, that I do not know them.'

'That is because you do not know me,' said Venetia simply.

Again that odd look crossed his face.

'You must let me know as much of you as I can—see as much of you as is possible, before I go back to India,' he said, playing with his line and not looking at Venetia.

'But you are not going yet?' she asked anxiously.

'Oh, six months soon pass! and I have only a six months' leave,' he said.

'I thought it was for two years?' cried Venetia in a tone of disappointment.

'No; for certain reasons I have taken only six months. Would you have liked it to have been two years?' he asked very quietly,

as if he had asked her would she have liked a red ribbon instead of a blue.

'Indeed, yes!' Venetia said frankly, thrown off her guard. 'We shall all miss you dreadfully when you go. I do not know what we shall do without you!'

'Do you mean that, Miss Greville—really mean it?' he said, speaking in a moved voice.

'That we shall all miss you—yes,' she answered.

He took both her hands in his, and drew her gently to him.

'That *you* will miss me?' he said with meaning.

She looked at him quite frankly, and innocently; then her eyes dropped to the ground, she blushed vividly and trembled, but she did not speak.

'Is it so hard a thing to say?' he half whispered. 'Or do you want to spare my pride and my love? Let me know my fate at once! I cannot bear this suspense! Venetia, tell me, is there a future for me? Have you any feeling in your heart that may grow up into an enduring and life-long love? Do you think you shall ever care for me enough to wish me to be always with you? Tell me, dear, frankly, faithfully, tenderly, as you say all things.'

'I do care for you very much, Colonel Camperdown,' said Venetia in a low voice.

'How much?' holding her hands, while she turned away her drooping face, shy, ashamed, embarrassed, but how happy! 'How much?' he repeated, in almost a whisper.

'Perhaps as much as you would wish,' said Venetia, also in a whisper, her blushing face drooping lower.

'God bless you, my darling! God bless you for that dear word! And you will stay with me always, my darling? You will be my wife—my loved, my cherished wife?'

'Do you care to make your wife of a girl who has been so silly as I have been?' she answered, her eyes filling with tears. 'And after you tried to save me too!'

'As if that were anything now that it is all over!' he said. 'Why, my darling, that was only a dream—a girl's fancy—a child's romance! That was not what *our* love will be! Ours is real; this was a mere play. Now that it has gone, and all your sorrow has passed and left me only the joy, I can well afford to laugh at it. No; that was not the truth, and this is. *Is* this the truth, Venetia?'

'Yes,' said Venetia timidly.

'Now I am repaid for all,' he said. He took her in his arms, and kissed her sweet face with as much reverence as love; while

she felt as if she had indeed come out of a dream, and was now, for the first time, fully awake to the truth and joy of life.

It was with a strange feeling of pain that Venetia forced herself to remember those other actors in the drama that was drawing now to an end. How terrible those quarrels seemed to her, happy and strong in the consciousness of a love that was real!—a love that was as free from affectation as exaggeration, from self-deception as from chance of jealousy, or likelihood of change. And yet how sorry she was for both Graziella and Ernest, that they had missed their way so fearfully, and brought so much trouble on their own heads! For herself, how glad for all that she had missed, and all that she had gained! And yet again, how ardently she wished that she had never seen Ernest Pierrepont—that she could have taken to Harold a heart that had never been touched by any other man—a fancy absolutely undisturbed by false shadows or deceiving images! But, as that could not be, she was only conscious of deep thankfulness that she had been spared from the one for such glad acceptance of the other, and that she had passed through even the fire for the peace waiting for her on the other side. Yes, it was indeed all the difference between fancy and fact, imagination and reality, dreams and waking; and she said all this as she stood beside her lover, and bade him good-bye, turning to encounter once more the ghosts of former follies and the realities of present pains.

‘And you are happy?’ he asked, as he held her hands in his and searched her face, at all times the mirror of her mind, and which was now as full of such calm delight as one might fancy would be on an angel’s when there comes up to heaven the soul of the beloved left for some time on the earth.

‘Happy? yes!’ she said. ‘No one could be more so. I have found more than I ever expected to find—more than I had any right to expect; and it seems to me now that I can never know a day’s sorrow again.’

‘You never shall, so far as I can shield you, my darling!’ he said tenderly. ‘What you have given to me I will preserve with my life, and as my life; and never through me shall you regret the precious words you have said to-day.’

She looked into his eyes, her own as tender as his; then, with an indescribable expression of something that was more devotion than submission, she bent her head and raised his hand to her lips; and Harold was wise enough to accept her little act of womanly homage as it was meant, and not to spoil the sweet sentiment that it conveyed by a nineteenth-century gallantry—which would have been out of place.

When Venetia met her luckless friends at the old mill, a glance at their faces and attitudes told her that no good had come of their attempt at reconciliation. Graziella was the step in advance, flushed, feverish, on moral stilts; Ernest was the step behind, pale, concentrated, viciously polite, because irreconcilably estranged. They had quarrelled the whole time about Venetia, whom Graziella accused her lover of trying to win back, and who, herself, she said, was willing to be won. Ernest, whom the former of these two accusations touched nearly enough, and who only hoped that the latter was true, defended himself hotly, all the more so because of that thread of truth which gave the thing its real meaning; and the result of each word from her, and reply from him, had been to pour acid on to wounds, and heap fuel on to fire. It was not to be wondered at, then, that the whole thing came to an end now and for ever; and that when they met, to Venetia, serene, fortified, blessed by her own experience, they were like people who had found the highest treasure of life and had wilfully flung it into the mire.

‘It is all over, Venny,’ said Graziella defiantly, when Venetia joined them. ‘We have had our last talk, and nothing can ever reconcile us again. I hope never to see Mr. Pierrepont after to-day, and I am very sorry that I ever saw him at all.’

Venetia looked from one to the other.

‘Oh, what a pity that you cannot agree!’ she said; ‘and when you love each other so much!’

‘Oh, no, we don’t!’ said Graziella, still defiant. ‘It was all a mistake, Venny. Mr. Pierrepont loves you—not me, and I know now that I never cared for him. I was dazzled, and I wanted to see if I could win him from you; but I was never really in love with him. I thought I was not at the time; and I know it now!’

‘Graziella!’ cried Venetia, inexpressibly shocked.

‘Well, you like the truth, Venny, and now you have it,’ said the pretty little person audaciously. ‘So I shall go away to-morrow to my guardian, and write over to papa and tell him he need not give himself any trouble about my engagement; that it was all nonsense, and is now over. And if you tell the truth, Venny, you will say that you are very glad to get rid of me.’

‘You have no right to say that, Graziella,’ said Venetia gravely.

‘Oh, yes, I have, because it is the truth!’ she answered; ‘and I shall be very glad to go. It has been a horrid mistake all through.’

Ernest had not spoken as yet, but when Graziella said this, and

Venetia's eyes turned to him, asking confirmation, he said in a freezing voice :

'Miss Despues is quite right, Miss Greville. It has been a mistake all through, as she says ; and now'—here his voice suddenly changed from its cold, hard, bitter tones into the exquisite tenderness which he knew so well how to use—'the only thing for both to do is to retrace our steps and get out of the coil which we fancied was to be the everlasting band of love. The truth with me, and I fancy with her, lies in quite a different direction,' his eyes fixed meaningly on Venetia.

But Venetia's face did not express the soft confusion, the underflush of joy that he had hoped to see. Was he too late ? he thought. Had she really steeled her heart against him ? She had loved him so much before—he had been so entirely the master of her emotions, her sentiments, her soul—he could not believe that she had taken herself from him so that he could not recover her again. No ; it must be that he could win her back to himself in all her former blind enthusiasm now that the truth had become clear to him, and that he knew it was Venetia whom he loved, and Venetia whom he ought to marry.

He thought himself quite into tranquillity and certitude on this ; and in a few days' time he went once more to Oak-tree House, and sat in the old place near Venetia's feet, and rolled out the old, high-sounding, vague, suggestive phrases which had been her soul's dearest food. But now, to-day, Venetia listened to him with a kind of wonder, saying to herself :

'Did I ever believe in all this, and think it fine and real ? What a child I was three months ago ! How ignorant, and how silly !'

At last Ernest said abruptly :

'Do you know, Miss Greville, that our old friend Charley Mossman is engaged to Miss Backhouse—at last ?'

'Yes,' said Venetia.

'Ah ! he told you, then ?'

'No, he did not,' she answered ; 'Colonel Camperdown told me,' steadily.

'Is it not an example good to follow ?' returned Ernest, though he did not like the introduction of Colonel Camperdown's name, and felt jarred and put out of tune by it. He suddenly flung himself on his knees by her side, and tried to take her hands. 'Dear, dearest Venetia !' he said, 'let me hear you say yes—let me know that you have forgiven my temporary blindness, and that you love me still, and will be my wife.'

'No, no, no !' cried Venetia, rising in disorder and drawing her

hands from his. 'No! do not say such things to me, Mr. Pierrepont; I cannot hear them, and I will not.'

He thought it was the disorder of a grieving tenderness too abruptly reassured.

'Dear, yes!' he pleaded passionately; 'have you no forgiveness, my beautiful lady—my saintly, sweet, and noble Beatrice?'

'Forgiveness? yes, all—all, heartily!' she said.

'And love—love, my Venetia?'

'No, no love; and I am not either Venetia to you, nor yours in any way,' she answered, with more calmness and more pride.

'Your love for me has died?' he asked incredulously.

'Yes; died for ever. I have wakened out of my dream, and I could not go to sleep again!'

'Yet you did love me,' he said, with something of a menace—something of mocking in his voice.

'I did,' she said, meeting his eyes; 'you know that I did!'

'And not now?'

'Not now—not now,' she answered.

'And who has supplanted me?' he asked, always with that half-mocking accent.

At this moment the well-known ring came to the bell, the well-known feet crossed the floor, and the servant, opening the door, announced: 'Colonel Camperdown.'

Venetia looked at Ernest.

'You know now,' she said, as she went forward to meet him—her hero, her protector, her lover, and her friend; feeling as she laid her hand in his that now she was safe, and that nothing could henceforth harm her.

But Graziella, who, for all her wild words and wicked ways had really loved Ernest Pierrepont, had a fever that nearly cost her her life; and Ernest, who, when he had lost her for ever, found out that he had really loved Venetia, mooned about the world in a broken-hearted way that was by no means affectation, but that was in very truth the Nemesis that generally follows sooner or later on the follies and mistakes of men.

(The End.)

Quips and Cranks at our Club Window.

BY AN OLD ENTHUSIAST AND A YOUNG CYNIC.

No. XI.—HAPPINESS.

'WHEN were you happy?' said Jack to Joe.
 'Or have you forgotten it long ago?
 Was it upon your bridal morn?
 Or when your little child was born?
 Or when you gained your Chancery suit,
 And a hundred thousand pounds to boot?
 Or on the day you capped your glories,
 And won the county from the Tories?
 Or when they made you a baronet?'
 —'Really,' said Joe, 'I quite forget,
 Though, if the very truth were told,
 'Twas down in childhood's days of old;
 When I was taken to the play,
 And dreamt about it night and day.'

No. XII.—TWO MEN I KNOW.

I KNOW a Duke; well—let him pass—
 I may not call his Grace an ass,
 Though if I did—I'd do no wrong,
 Save to the asses; and my song.

The Duke is neither wise nor good,
 He gambles, drinks, scorns womanhood,
 And at the age of twenty-four
 Was worn and battered as three-score.

I know a waiter in Pall Mall,
 Who works, and waits, and reasons well,
 Is gentle, courteous, and refined,
 And has a magnet in his mind.

What is it makes his graceless Grace
 So like a jockey out of place?
 What makes the waiter—tell who can—
 So very like a gentleman?

Perhaps their mothers ! God is great !
 Perhaps 'tis accident—or Fate !
 Perhaps because—hold not, my pen !
 We can breed horses, but not men !

No. XIII.—NEVER GROW OLD.

I LOOKED in the tell-tale mirror,
 And saw the marks of care,
 The crow's feet and the wrinkles,
 And the gray in the dark-brown hair.
 My wife looked o'er my shoulder—
 Most beautiful was she,
 'Thou wilt never grow old, my love,' she said,
 'Never grow old to me.'

 'For age is the chilling of heart,
 And thine, as mine can tell,
 Is as young and warm as when first we heard
 The sound of our bridal bell !'
 I turned and kissed her ripe red lips :
 'Let time do its worst on me,
 If in my Soul, my Love, my Faith,
 I never seem old to thee !'

No. XIV.—EATING AND DRINKING.

'Twas eating and not drinking
 That cost us Eden's bowers,
 'Twas Adam and not Noah
 That damned this world of ours.
 Then eat no grapes, I prithee !
 They yield a juice divine,
 And copy Father Noah,
 Who turned them into wine.
 An apple wrought the mischief,
 A grape repairs the wrong,
 So blessings on the vintage,
 The wine cup, and the song !

No. XV.—QUITS.

YOU scorned the rose I gave you,
 And threw it heedless by—
 My heart was in the token,
 And *yours* in the reply ;
 I've nothing more to ask you,
 'Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye !'

No. XVI.—A QUESTION AND A REPLY.

THE YOUNG MAN TO THE OLD.

SAY, whither art thou going,
 Thy hands upon thy breast,
 Thy face toward the sunlight
 Fast fading in the west ?

THE OLD MAN TO THE YOUNG.

I am going, slowly going,
 Undismayed and undistressed,
 To the last estate that's left me,
 To the last, may be, the best !
 To the regions of Oblivion,
 To the chambers of the blest,
 'Where the wicked cease from troubling,
 And the weary are at rest !'

THE YOUNG MAN'S REPLY.

God have thee in His keeping !
 'Tis His, not our behest,
 But is this *all* we come to
 After our toil and quest ?
 Is nothing we aspire to,
 O'erburdened and oppressed,
 Ever to recompense us—
 Nothing but Peace and Rest ?

No. XVII.—COMPETITIVE CRAM.

I COULD not tell the cutler's name
 Who sold the blade that murdered Cæsar,
 Or fix the hour when Egypt's queen
 First thought that Anthony might please her.
 I could not say how many teeth
 King Rufus had when Tyrrell shot him ;
 Or after hapless Wolsey's death
 How soon or late King Hal forgot him.
 I could not tell how many miles
 Within a score rolled Thames or Tiber,
 Or count the centuries of a tree
 By close inspection of its fibre.
 So I was plucked, and lost my chance,
 And plodding CRAM passed proudly o'er me—
 Who cares for CRAM ? I've Common Sense,
 And Health, and all the world before me !

Juliet.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT-CAMERON.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIVE YEARS AFTER.

FIVE years after! Oh blissful license of the story-teller, to whom it is allowed thus to make free with Father Time! Five years of weariness, of dulness, of disappointment! What would not some of us give to be rid of five years with as many words!

Only think of it . . . Five hot stuffy summers, made unbearable perchance with toilings in close City rooms all day, and with harder toilings still in west-end ball-rooms by night—five biting winters of nipping frosts and Christmas bills—five backward springs of drizzling rains and driving east winds! Think of all the vexations, bodily and spiritual, that five years must inevitably bring to all of us, and then say whether you would not gladly shake them off your memory like a night's bad dream, and wake to begin afresh—whether you would not joyfully wipe off old scores, old griefs, old sins, and, with new hopes and new chances, begin again to write down the story of your life upon a blank and unsullied page.

Oh Rip Van Winkle, most blessed among men, how gladly would some of us follow your example, and outsleep, since we can scarcely manage to outlive, the unloveliness of some of the years of our lives!

Well, to the story-teller it is allowed to do this wonderful feat—to say that so many years out of the lives of those he has created shall be spirited away. Never mind how many—be it five, fifteen, or fifty—he has but to say the word, and hey, presto! it is done.

So it is that I begin again with—five years after!

Five years! during which my different characters have all been toiling painfully through the dulnesses and disappointments of uneventful lives, through which I will not condemn you, my reader, to follow them.

Now let us find them all out again, and see what changes these five years have worked in them.

It is five years, then—five years since Gretchen Rudenbach sat shivering in Sotherne parish church to watch a bridal party pass

in and out, and to no one have these years brought greater changes than to the little music-teacher.

Gretchen is 'Mdlle. Rudenbach' now, and well known to the fashionable and musical world. She has left the little house in Pimlico, and, carrying Miss Pinkin with her as companion and chaperone, has migrated to a semi-detached villa in Victoria Villas, Notting Hill.

It is highly improbable that Gretchen's musical talents, which were very considerable, and her industry, which was untiring, would alone have wrought this great improvement in her worldly prospects.

Seldom, indeed, do talent and industry, if unaccompanied by luck and interest, lead to the summit of any professional tree.

Gretchen's rise of fortune came about in this way. There was a certain Lady Caroline Skinflint, who lived in Wilton Crescent, and who was an acknowledged leader of the fashionable world. Lady Caroline was a younger daughter of the late Duke of Belgravia, which sufficiently explains the undoubtedness of her position. In her unmarried days, being unattractive in person and unpleasing in manner, she had been nobody in particular, for the maiden aunt even of a duke is not accounted of great social importance; but when, at the somewhat advanced age of thirty-eight, she escaped at length from the maternal thralldom of the Dowager Duchess, and took unto herself her bosom's lord in the person of the Honourable Theophilus Skinflint, whose brains were even if possible smaller than his income, Lady Caroline straightway became a very important personage indeed.

To be asked or not asked to Lady Caroline's musical soirées became almost a social test of respectability, whilst bland indeed were the smiles the world vouchsafed to those blessed few who were admitted into the sacred inner circle of her *petits dîners* or *réunions intimes*.

Lady Caroline gave herself out as a patron of music; not that she in reality knew or cared much about it, but that, as she would have told you, it is always necessary to take up something, and so she took up music.

In pursuance of these views, she gave annually four musical evening parties, into which she endeavoured, and in a great measure succeeded, to cram a very large number of persons into very moderate-sized rooms at the minimum of expenditure that was possible.

It was after sending out some hundred or so of cards for one of these entertainments that Lady Caroline cast about to seek for the utmost amount of cheap musical talent that she could lay hands upon wherewith to entertain her invited guests.

Happening one day to run up into the drawing-room of her latest *protégée* and bosom friend *pro tem.*, Mrs. Harrington Spotts, whose pedigree was short but whose purse she found conveniently long, Lady Caroline discovered, not that lady herself, but her little girl, and, what was more to the purpose, the little girl's music-mistress, who was playing over a sonata of Beethoven to her pupil.

Lady Caroline withdrew herself behind the portière and listened, struck by the masterly touch of the performance.

'Brava! brava!' she cried, clapping her hands and coming forward into the room as the last chords sounded. 'You play very nicely, young lady—who are you?'

'She is Miss Rudenbach, my music-governess,' answered the juvenile daughter of the house of Harrington Spotts, whilst Gretchen rose blushing from the piano.

'Rudenbach? a German name, eh? I am Lady Caroline Skinfint—don't be afraid, my dear;' this was added with reassuring condescension, as though the mere sound of the patrician name were calculated to strike awe into the breast of a German music-teacher; but Gretchen, who, dreadful to relate, had never heard of her ladyship, was not particularly impressed either with awe or with admiration.

'What do you charge for playing at musical parties?' continued the lady, rushing at once to the point.

'I—I really don't know,' stammered Gretchen, for she had never done such a thing in her life.

Lady Caroline was not blind to the chance thus presented to her.

'Ah, I see,' she said; 'you have never played out—ah! well, you are very young, and not of course by any means perfect in your art—that is not to be expected; but you have a good touch, and your playing pleases me. I am a patron of music, and am going to have a musical party next week, on the 14th; if you like to come and play at it for me, it would be a very good opening for you, and will probably get you several new pupils.'

'Your ladyship is very kind, if you think I could play well enough,' murmured Gretchen gratefully and doubtfully.

'Well, of course, as you are not a regular professional, you must not expect me to pay you anything, but I will recommend you to all my friends; that is to say, if you play to my satisfaction,—and you will get your supper.' So for her supper Gretchen was engaged. 'Recollect, you are to play as often as I want you to play, and let me have a list of the things you can do best by Monday at latest, that I may get my programmes printed.'

And Lady Caroline went her way, and boasted to her friends

and acquaintances of the wonderful young pianiste she had secured for the fourteenth. 'Quite a second Arabella Goddard, I assure you,' she said, 'and with more feeling; she is considered the rising light in the musical world—quite young, and a perfect genius!'

By the fourteenth everybody was talking about the new star whose performances they were to listen to in Wilton Crescent, and whom of course nobody had ever heard of before. Lady Caroline chuckled to herself with delight when she reflected upon the piece of wonderful good fortune which had enabled her to discover this brilliant performer, and her own shrewdness in securing her services for nothing!

The evening arrived, and Gretchen, in her pearl grey merino with the soft folds of a white muslin fichu up to her throat, and a simple little white flower in her hair, looking more Quaker-like and innocent than ever among all the bare shoulders and painted cheeks and golden-dyed hair of full-dressed Belgravia, and adding by her singularly modest appearance considerably to the effect she produced, sat down amid a dead silence to play her first piece.

She was not at all nervous, and she played splendidly, quite surpassing even Lady Caroline's hopes of her; she felt herself upon her mettle, and was conscious that most of her future success as a musician probably depended upon how she acquitted herself on this occasion.

The result was beyond her expectations. There was a perfect storm of applause as she finished, and many people crowded round the piano to be introduced to her.

A great professional singer, whose kindness of heart is well known to be equal to her talent, and who was present 'as a friend,' which meant of course that she would probably volunteer to sing something for her hostess later on in the evening, spoke most kindly to our little Gretchen, and was so taken by her gentleness and simplicity that she became from that day forward one of her best and staunchest friends.

In point of fact, Gretchen's fortune was made. Engagements to play at evening parties, for which she soon learned to charge five guineas, flowed in upon her from all quarters; pupils, no longer little girls in their first stages, but grown-up young ladies, came to her in greater numbers than she could well manage to teach, and by-and-by she raised her terms to a guinea a lesson, and moved to her prettily-furnished villa at Notting Hill, where her own friends came to visit her, and Miss Pinkin no longer dared to snub her, or to prophesy evil of her.

And the best of it all for Lady Caroline Skinflint was that, remembering to whom she owed her prosperity, Gretchen Rudenbach

always played at the parties of her patroness upon the same terms upon which she had on the first occasion engaged her; that is to say, for nothing—and her supper!

It was evening. Gretchen had finished her modest repast, and leaving Miss Pinkin to lock up the wine and to give sundry orders to a refractory housemaid, she had retired to her little flower-scented drawing-room.

The room was nearly dark, the windows wide open, and the white muslin curtains fluttered in the evening breeze; a bush of white lilac in the little suburban garden outside kept tapping against the panes, and filled the air with a delicious fresh scent. There was a flower-stand well filled in one corner, more flowers in vases on the mantelpiece, a general air of prettiness and comfort over the whole room. Gretchen sat at the piano in the half light, and played over some passages of the sonata that she was going to perform at a musical party that evening.

Someone came running up the steps of the house, opened the door, and, unannounced, stepped into the little drawing-room.

‘Don’t let me disturb you,’ said Cis Travers, just laying one hand for an instant on the musician’s arm as he passed her, and then sinking down on to a sofa on the other side of the piano. And Gretchen, with a little nod, went on with her playing.

Cis Travers has altered considerably since we last saw him on his wedding morning. He has grown much older and more manly-looking; and at the same time has lost the look of boyish frankness which was at that time a charm in his face, and which has been replaced by a peevish, discontented expression which is scarcely pleasant to behold.

Gretchen played on to the end of her andante, whilst Cis lay with his feet on the sofa, and his hands thrown back behind his yellow head. When she had finished, she twisted herself round on the music-stool.

‘What have you come to me for this evening?’ she asked, in her gentle voice.

‘Oh, worried to death as usual! My wife has gone to the opera—we had to dine at seven o’clock; fancy that in June! and it is twice a-week at least that it happens. What is a man to do with himself, left all alone in an empty house at eight o’clock?’

‘Why don’t you go with Mrs. Travers, then?’

‘I? my dear little girl! you know I detest it! The only music I like is yours, Gretchen,’ he added, stretching out his hand to her. Probably in the half-light Gretchen did not see it, for she made no responding movement.

‘Still,’ she continued gently, ‘it is a pity such a lovely woman

as Mrs. Travers should always go out without her husband, alone—or with other men?

‘Do not lecture me, Gretchen; I came here to be consoled, and not scolded. I am so fortunate in finding you at home, too.’

‘I shall not be able to stop long, I am afraid. I shall have to go and dress very soon. I am going out to a musical party. Is it nine o’clock yet?’

‘Twenty minutes to—there’s lots of time; don’t be running away just yet. My life is very lonely, and it does me good to talk to you. Juliet has her friends and her parties; she does not care a farthing what becomes of me. She never did care in the least about me—never from the first,’ added Cis, with irritation.

Gretchen made no answer; the fingers of her left hand ran lightly over the keys of the piano, and her lip quivered, unseen, in the darkening twilight. It was very sad to her to hear Cis talk like that. Although she had always loved this man, with all his weaknesses and follies, to which she was by no means blind, it gave her no pleasure to hear that he was not happy, and that the love he had once felt for his beautiful wife was turned into bitterness and peevish discontent.

Gretchen had one of those pure and unselfish natures that love goodness for its own sake. She would far rather have heard that Cis was perfectly happy in his domestic relations than have had to listen to all the miserable complaints which testified to such flattering confidence in herself.

‘Do you remember,’ continued Cis presently, ‘do you remember the old days when I used to meet you in Wigmore Street, and we walked together to Bloomsbury Square?’

‘I remember very well,’ answered Gretchen, to whom every one of those interviews was as distinctly present as if they had happened only yesterday.

‘I think I was a fool in those days!’ said Cis with a sigh; ‘I imagined myself violently in love with a woman who has done nothing but scorn me all my life, and all the while there was an affectionate little heart close by which I might have had for the asking, I believe—eh, Gretchen?’

‘What rubbish you are talking!’ cried Gretchen, jumping up so hurriedly that she upset the music-stool, and shutting up the piano with a slam. It was a mercy that there was too little light to see how scarlet her cheeks had turned.

Cis was accustomed to give way to these little flights of sentimentalism at times; and Gretchen, who knew how little he had really cared about her in those ‘old days,’ of which he was wont now to make so much, found such speeches particularly trying to bear,

‘I must go and dress,’ she said, striking a match and lighting the candles, lest Cis should relapse into the ‘twilight mood.’

‘Wait one minute; I have really something to ask of you,’ said Cis, sitting upright on the sofa.

‘Well, make haste,’ said Gretchen, in the most practical voice; adding immediately, lest he should think her unkind, ‘I shall be so glad to do anything for you, as you know well.’

‘My wife is going to give a musical party—will you come and play at it?’ said Cis.

‘Oh, no, no!’ cried Gretchen in sudden dismay, while her blue eyes looked at him with a sort of horror; for what woman can bear the thought of meeting face to face that other more successful woman who fills the place she has wished to occupy herself? ‘I cannot do that—pray don’t ask me.’

‘Why not? It is not I who ask you—she will. She was talking of whom she should get to perform at this party to-night at dinner, and someone recommended you. I think it was Lady Caroline Skinflint.’

‘Lady Caroline is a very kind friend to me, but do not ask me to go to your wife’s house. I—I should not like it,’ she said hesitatingly.

‘But I should like it so much, Gretchen,’ pleaded Cis, whose vanity, always a weak point with him, was flattered by her evident distress. ‘Do go, to please me.’

‘I will think it over, but I had much rather not. I do not see why you want me to go—you can always come and see me here; and now I must go—good-night.’ She held out her hand to him for an instant, and left him, and Cis sauntered down idly to his club.

He was not exactly in love with Gretchen, but it pleased him to think that she was very fond of him. And just as in old times, from sheer idleness and insouciance, he had slipped into a sort of semi-sentimental flirtation with her, which had meant nothing but selfish self-indulgence to himself, but which had brought a great deal of trouble to the girl whose friend he professed to be, so now he had let himself slide with the stream into much the same position with her. To be the sport of fate, the victim of circumstances, was Cecil Travers’s character in everything. He had good instincts, but he was too indolent to act up to them—he could be generous and even energetic in fits and starts, but he had no strength, either moral or physical—he was neither bad nor vicious, he was simply utterly and deplorably weak.

Gretchen, to whom fortunately five years, without robbing her of any of her gentle modesty, had nevertheless brought some

knowledge of the world—without ever ceasing to love and honour the man who had done so much for her when she was poor and homeless, had nevertheless lost much of the admiration and almost adoration with which she had regarded him in old days. Her idol had stepped down somewhat from his pedestal, and Gretchen's heart, which was of that essentially feminine and gentle type which loves only the more because it pities and sees failings in that which it loves, felt no contempt for Cis, only a great yearning to make him happier and better.

It was unspeakably painful to her that he should talk so openly even to herself about the unhappiness of his married life, and the want of love between himself and his wife; it was painful, it was even shocking to her, and yet it was passing sweet to think that he should turn for comfort to her in his troubles.

For of course Gretchen took his part. Of course she felt anger and hatred towards the wife whose history she did not know, and whose proud beauty she had only once beheld.

Women, generally even the best of them, are cruelly severe towards each other. They are the harshest of censors, the most unjust of judges—for they condemn unheard. Gretchen heard vaguely in the outskirts of that great world into which she herself went in such a humble manner, that Mrs. Travers was a woman of fashion, was much admired and much sought after, and she at once formed her own conclusions. To her Cecil's wife was a heartless coquette, given over to dissipation and worldliness and love of dress, who neglected her husband, and made his home wretched in order to indulge freely in her own frivolous pursuits.

To go to the house of this woman who had not only taken Cecil irretrievably away from her, but who did not value that which she had won, seemed a very dreadful ordeal to Gretchen. Nevertheless, Cis had asked her to go—had said it would give him pleasure to hear her play at his house. To give Cis pleasure Gretchen would have gladly walked barefoot from Notting Hill to Grosvenor Street. So it came to pass that when Mrs. Travers, in a little monogrammed and perfumed note, presented her compliments to Mdlle. Rudenbach, and would be glad to know if she would be able to play for her on Thursday, the 20th inst., and what were Mdlle. Rudenbach's terms, &c.,—Gretchen in reply stated that she would be very happy to play at Mrs. Travers's evening party on the 26th, and begged to enclose her terms.

CHAPTER XX.

BENEATH A SMILING FACE.

VERY seldom indeed, in these days, did the old-fashioned iron gates at the end of the avenue at Sotherne Court open to receive their young mistress.

Mrs. Travers would not live in the home of her childhood. Now and then she would come down for a couple of days, or stop there a night, to break the journey to or from Scotland, but she could bear no permanent residence there.

Sotherne Court was a haunted house to her—haunted by ghosts of the past, which, under the present circumstances of her life, it was simply impossible for her to face.

Into the two months that Hugh Fleming had made Sotherne Court his home, had been crowded enough of associations and memories to fill every nook and corner of the old house.

There it was that he had stood as he had listened to her singing—in that chair he had been accustomed to sit in the evening—down that walk in the shrubbery it was that they had wandered together—under that tree they had sat together; there was not a room in the house, or a path in the garden, where she could not conjure up his image. Before her marriage she had loved these memories, but now they had become absolutely hateful to her.

So the old house was left in undisturbed possession of Mrs. Blair and the servants.

This was a better state of things than Mrs. Blair had dared to hope for. Juliet had not been unkind to her stepmother, and Cis had always been favourably disposed towards her. As they did not intend to live at Sotherne themselves, there seemed no reason why Mrs. Blair should not continue to make it her home. So Mrs. Blair lived there on all the fat of the land.

She asked her own friends, French acquaintances, principally of her ante-nuptial days, to stay with her, greatly to old Higgs's disgust, who was loud in his grumblings against the 'dirty furrin French folk,' as he insisted on calling a perfectly unobjectionable Monsieur and Madame Gambert, who were frequently guests at Sotherne.

Mrs. Blair played the country lady to these and other admiring friends, gave little dinner-parties for their entertainment, drove them out to see the show places in the neighbourhood in the ancient landau, drawn by two remarkably fat and lazy old horses, and did the honours of Sotherne Court generally, as if the whole place belonged to her.

Higgs hated Mrs. Blair and her friends; the new state of

things was abhorrent to him ; but, like a brave man, he stuck to his post manfully. As long as he had breath and life, Higgs declared he would stay at Sotherne to serve his dear young mistress, and to prevent the old place from going to rack and ruin in the hands of a parcel of strangers. Higgs was a thorn in Mrs. Blair's side—he was for ever doing things in direct opposition to her wishes. He often refused, respectfully but firmly, to obey her orders, stating that his duty to Mrs. Travers prevented him from doing so.

‘Very sorry, ma’am, but my conscience wouldn’t allow me no peace if I were to give out that there old silver tea service,’ was the sort of remark he was wont to make ; ‘seeing that my mistress is away, and I left in charge, as it were, of her property—anything to oblige you, marm, I am sure, but I must do my duty *first* !’

And Mrs. Blair might entreat, or threaten, or storm, it was all of no avail. Higgs would jingle his keys as if to say, ‘Don’t you wish you may get it !’ and go off to his pantry chuckling over her discomfiture.

Mrs. Blair would have given a great deal for Higgs to leave, and in pursuance of that object she made herself as ungracious and unpleasant to him as she possibly could ; but unluckily Higgs saw through it, and was well determined not to give her that supreme triumph.

‘She thinks as how I’ll give warning,’ said the old man to himself ; ‘she won’t find Ebenezer Higgs so easy to move. I’ll stay here till I drop sooner than go, if it’s only to spite her ! I ain’t *her* servant, and *she* can’t give me the sack !’ And so the only result of the feud between them was that Higgs made himself more intensely disagreeable than ever, and on hearing shortly after the dispute concerning the silver tea service that Mrs. Blair expected some friends to stay with her for Christmas, he took the opportunity of declaring that the dining-room grate was breaking to pieces, and had the whole fireplace taken out and sent off to the ironmonger’s to be renewed ; so that the company had to use the breakfast-room, and Mrs. Blair had to postpone a dinner-party which she had intended giving in honour of her guests.

Of course all these things were very trying ; but still, on the whole, Mrs. Blair was by no means dissatisfied with her lot in life. Day after day she congratulated herself upon the successful termination of all her hopes and plans. How well everything had turned out, and how different everything would have been if she had not stopped that letter from Colonel Fleming ! Of course Juliet would never have married Cis—that odious guardian would have come back, and she herself would have been turned adrift

upon the world with a very small income, whereas now everything had ended for the best. She had a comfortable and luxurious home and plenty of servants, whom she neither kept nor paid to wait upon her; she had no expenses, and her position in the county as Mr. Blair's widow was everything that she could wish. And as to Juliet, she of course was perfectly happy—probably much happier than if she had been allowed to marry her Colonel; no one would ever know anything about that letter now, and Mrs. Blair felt convinced that she had done right, perfectly right, in suppressing it. After all, the result had justified the means. All's well that ends well.

Of her nearest neighbours and connections, the Traverses of Broadley, Mrs. Blair saw but very little. Five years had not passed away without working sundry changes for them.

Mary was married to a well-to-do squire in the next county, and Flora had shot up into a tall thin wisp of a girl of sixteen, with a face like Georgie's, but with a promise of more beauty than had ever belonged to her dead sister. And between the squire and the sad past, Time had already begun to spread his cobweb veil. Slowly, but surely, Georgie's memory became—not forgotten—for when can a father ever forget his dead child?—but vaguer and more indistinct; the bitterness went out of the recollection of her, and only the sweet savour of her goodness and gentleness left its halo around her early grave.

The home gap was slowly filling up again, as all such gaps do—God forbid that they should not. However wide the breach that is made, however hopeless the blank may be, the strangeness and the agony of it does in time wear off—the wound may leave its scars, but the open sore heals up.

Squire Travers was indeed no longer the same man he used to be—he was more subdued and patient in manner, less irritable, and less given to strong language; but he no longer now gave way to fits of melancholy and depression.

He had been very pleased at his son's marriage, and that event had certainly been the first thing that had roused him from the utter prostration that had followed upon his daughter's death.

Then, although, as he had himself said, he would never again keep the hounds, yet, after two winters had passed away, the old hunting instinct had awoke again, and when the third season came round he had found himself quite unable to resist it.

When he had stood looking out of the window one afternoon in November for some time, and then had suddenly turned round and said to his wife, 'I think I shall potter out on Sunbeam to-morrow morning—I hear the hounds meet at Cosby Farm,' the

speech had been hailed by Mrs. Travers as very good news indeed. After that he went out regularly, far or near, a little shamefacedly at first, lest anyone should think him heartless to his daughter's memory, but by-and-by with all the keenness and zest revived; besides, Wattie had set his mind at ease.

'She would have liked you to go out again, I know,' he had said to him, and the Squire had silently pressed his hand.

'It would have made her miserable to think you had given up hunting, and it does her no good, poor darling,' continued Wattie; 'and besides, you have Flora to think of.'

Yes, there was Flora; for her sake it was desirable that her father should go out with her instead of leaving her, as had lately happened, to the care of the groom—for Flora, like Georgie, 'had it in her,' and no considerations could stop her from slinking off after the hounds whenever they came within reasonable distance.

There was one thing that the Squire could not be too particular about with his younger daughter, and that was in the matter of the horses she rode. No half-broken, untried animal should ever carry a daughter of his again; every horse Flora mounted was well trained and broken in for a lady's riding, and warranted free from all sorts of vices. The Squire, too, gave long prices for them.

Flora, who was quite as fearless and bold as her sister ever had been, sometimes resented this extra care that was taken of her; but one look from Wattie Ellison was generally sufficient to make her silent and submissive.

It was by no means an unhappy scene that was going on one mild winter's morning in the paddock at the back of the house. A number of hurdles had been set up at equal distances round the field, and Flora, mounted on a splendid young thoroughbred horse which her father had just bought for her, was careering round, taking the hurdles one after the other in steeple-chase fashion, whilst her father and Wattie, Davis the groom, and poor old Chanticleer, stood together in a group in the centre.

'Why, papa, you look like the showman at Astley's!' cried Flora, as with flushed cheeks she trotted up to them after her exploits. 'There you stand twisting about and flourishing your whip. I ought to have on pink skirts and spangles, and then we might get up a regular circus. Fancy you jumping through a paper hoop, papa!' and Flora laughed merrily with all a younger child's sauciness and impudence.

'You would look uncommonly well in spangles, I have no doubt, Flora,' said Wattie, patting her horse's neck, and looking up admiringly at her; upon which Flora made a pass at his hat with her whip, which of course she missed, and then shook her fist at

him with such a happy laugh, and looking so pretty the while, that, child as she was, there seemed to be some foundation for the county gossip, which reported that Wattie Ellison was only waiting till Flora should be eighteen to transfer openly to her the affection which he had formerly given to her sister.

That this was the Squire's dearest wish cannot be denied. He was so devoted to Wattie, that his poverty and small income were as nothing to him; he had calculated that he could give Flora enough to live on comfortably, and to secure this once-despised young man as his son-in-law was now one of his greatest hopes.

So the Squire took to hunting again, and Flora became his constant companion. Her mother shook her head lugubriously, and prophesied all sorts of evil things, but in the long run she was too pleased to see her husband more like his old self again to be very much disturbed, especially as Amy's education engrossed a good deal of her time; and as that young lady showed no tendency whatever for hunting tastes, she was able to carry out all her theories about the training of young ladies in a satisfactory manner in the person of her youngest daughter.

During the course of that same third winter, when the Squire took again to his hunting, an event happened which plunged the whole family into great grief for several days. This was the death of faithful old Chanticleer.

One morning the old hound refused the bread and milk which Flora had never once forgotten to give him every day in obedience to Georgie's dying wishes, and presently he hobbled up to her, for he had become very lame and infirm, and, lying down on the corner of her dress, licked her hand once, and then turned over on his side, and died without a struggle.

It was as if the last link with Georgie had been cut away—the old dog had for her sake become a general favourite, and even Mrs. Travers was upset at his sudden death. But after that, and save for that distressing incident, things altogether had fallen back into peaceful and happy grooves at Broadley House.

And Juliet—how had it fared with Juliet during these first five years of her married life?

The first year after their wedding Mr. and Mrs. Travers spent in travelling abroad, and it was during these travels, and after she had been married more than three months, that Juliet at length found courage to write to Colonel Fleming.

It was but a note, merely a few lines, thanking him for his wedding presents to her, and expressing her admiration of them; and then with a trembling hand she added:

'You have accused me of harshness and coldness towards you,

and of silence. Of the two former I am certainly guiltless, and of the latter I cannot understand that *you* should accuse *me*'—words which, when he read them, puzzled and bewildered him beyond description.

After their year abroad, Mr. and Mrs. Travers came home, but not to Sotherne; they bought a large house in Upper Grosvenor Street, and there established themselves.

For her beauty, her wealth, and her talent, Mrs. Travers soon gained a reputation in the London world; no one was so well dressed, or rode such good horses—no one drove such a perfect pair of ponies in the morning, or reclined in such a well-appointed barouche in the afternoon; her dinners were faultless; her evening parties, filled with the *élite* of London society, were invariable successes; she was courted, flattered, admired, and sought after; she had everything that money, and youth, and beauty could give her, and yet—and yet the woman was miserable.

For, to begin with, Juliet was daily discovering how true her own instincts had been when she had told Cis Travers long ago that they never could be happy together—that they were totally unsuited for each other, that her life and her mind were in no way similar to his, and that she and he must for ever go along different paths.

Juliet began to realise that most painful of all positions for a wife—that her husband was inferior to herself. He was her inferior in everything—in mind, in refinement, and in character. She had known it long ago—all her life, indeed—but she had not certainly understood until she was married to him how irksome and how unbearable such a reversal of the fitness of things would be to her.

She did not dislike her husband; far from it. She was indeed fond of him in a sort of way; but she derived no comfort or support to herself from his society.

She was for ever bending down to his level, trying to enter into his thoughts and feelings, whilst he could not in the smallest degree sympathise with or understand hers.

After a time Cis became dimly conscious that things were not as they should be between them; he could not understand the cause of it, but he began vaguely to perceive the effects, and with the natural weakness of his character, instead of making the best of the unalterable, he turned it into a perpetual subject of grumbling and complaint.

He became fretful and peevish, and was for ever reproaching his wife with her coldness and want of affection, until Juliet one day, fairly exasperated, turned round upon him, and reminded him that she had told him before she married him that she did not love

him, and that, having chosen to take her without affection, he had no right to reproach her for the want of it now.

After that, Cis let his wife pretty well alone, and took to going to Gretchen Rudenbach to pour out his troubles. Gretchen could understand him, he thought, with that fine vanity which always makes a man think himself understood by the woman who loves and admires him, although probably she has fifty times less comprehension of his true character than the woman who has not affection enough for him to make her blind to his faults.

And Juliet went her own way. She had now but one object in her life—to forget; and if there is one thing more unattainable than any other unattainable thing that is beyond our reach, it is that same gift of forgetfulness! Hard indeed it is to find where we may drain a draught of the waters of Lethe!

The bitter thought of what might have been, in comparison with what is, is one that it is almost impossible to shut entirely out of our minds.

To a man, hard mental work does perhaps sometimes succeed in keeping at arm's length the ghosts of past joys and the tortures of unavailing regret; but a woman can seldom hope for such a safe and wholesome discipline. To her no sort of work is open but the unending toil of pleasure; and pleasure which cannot occupy the brain has no power whatever to stifle recollection.

It was in vain that Juliet Travers plunged into a whirl of dissipation which lasted day and night, and for which she had no natural taste; in vain that she filled up every waking hour with engagement after engagement, that she surrounded herself with friends and acquaintances of the most frivolous type, who served, it is true, to amuse her, but who often disgusted her at the same time with their worldly shallowness. For a time, indeed, her thoughts might be distracted by what was going on around her; but wherever she went, and whatever she was doing, it was seldom indeed that the image of Hugh Fleming was entirely out of her mind.

She did her very best to stifle the ever-present thought of him—every feeling of honour and of duty urged her to do so; and yet the task became daily more and more impossible to her.

I am conscious that my heroine does not come out well at this period of her life; but I am not placing her before you as a perfect character, but as a woman full of faults and failings, who was tempest-tossed on a stormy sea, and who was groping her way helplessly, and not very successfully, through the darkness.

Juliet was no saint—she was very human indeed; and at this time of her life her better instincts and nobler qualities were certainly somewhat obscured.

She became very reckless—reckless of good and evil, and very bitter against her life.

Had there been anything in it to reconcile her to it, it might not have been so.

Had she had children, everything would probably have become different to her; but she had no child, and daily her husband, whom she had never loved, drifted farther and farther away from her. No one was dear to her; even the memory of her lost love, which had been so chillingly thrown back upon her, was so filled with bitter humiliation and wounded pride, that it had no power to soften her.

There is not perhaps a more dangerous and soul-degrading state of things than for a woman who has naturally a warm heart and quick impulsive feelings to be thus stranded, with every natural channel dried up wherein her affections should flow.

Failing love, such a woman often seeks to fill up the blank with admiration and flattery, thus perverting all the best and highest feelings of her nature.

And failing love—the one thing she yearned for unavailingly—there was no lack of admiration and adulation for the beautiful Mrs. Travers.

She grasped at them eagerly, hungrily; without these things, empty and unsatisfying as they were, she often felt that she should die; they served to drown her longings, and to keep at bay those other miserable thoughts which were for ever assailing her.

Therefore it was that Mrs. Travers hurried restlessly from place to place—that as soon as Goodwood week had brought the London season to a close, she must needs go to Homburg or Baden for a month, then back again to spend the autumn months in large country houses filled with the acquaintances of the season, where London life was but repeated *al fresco*, then generally to Paris for Christmas time, or down into Leicestershire with her hunters for a couple of months' hunting until the time for the season came round again.

In all these arrangements Cis for the most part acquiesced. Juliet always had the upper hand, and had, moreover, been so long accustomed to be absolute mistress, that it would have required a far stronger character than his to have dictated to her in these matters.

Juliet did not drag him about unwillingly; if he liked, he could come with her—if not, he might go elsewhere, wherever he liked; it was quite immaterial to her—she had always plenty of friends to go with her. So it often happened that she was staying alone at this or that country-house, whilst Cis, who neither hunted nor shot,

and therefore found himself very much bored in the country, would be sauntering up and down the King's Road at Brighton by himself, or else living as a bachelor in Grosvenor Street, and spending the best part of his idle days in Gretchen Rudenbach's drawing-room.

Often in a house full of well-dressed and fashionable women, Juliet Travers would be the very life and soul of the party, the centre round which all the men staying in the house would gather. Often, after an evening, when, resplendent in costly jewels and rare laces, she had fascinated everyone by her beauty and by her conversation, her host and hostess would agree that no party was complete without so gifted and talented a guest; the men would sing her praises long and loud in the smoking-room; whilst the women, gathered in knots in each other's bedrooms, filled with all the spite and envy that small-minded women always feel to any one of their own sex who outshines them, would pick her mercilessly to pieces, or 'damn with faint praise' the woman they had possibly parted from a minute before with clinging kisses and soft-voiced murmurs of endearing words.

And meanwhile the object of all this admiration and envy, with all her satins and diamonds flung aside, would be kneeling dishevelled by her bedside, shaken with convulsive sobs, and pressing to her lips with despairing moans a yellow faded note and a soiled and stiffened glove.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT HOME AGAIN.

It is a breathlessly hot night in early June, the hour is midnight, the scene is the crush-room of the Covent Garden Opera-house.

It is a popular night, the last strains of Gounod's 'Faust' have but lately died away; behind the scenes, according to a well-known and time-honoured tradition, the injured but forgiven Marguerite, who has just been wafted up to heaven by ingenious machinery among blue muslin clouds, together with the too fascinating Faust and the scarlet-tinted Mephistopheles, are all supposed to be sitting amicably together refreshing themselves with oysters and bottled stout, whilst in the front of the house the audience are crowding down the staircase and out into the entrance in search of their carriages. Not a very active search either. Now and then somebody's carriage is loudly proclaimed to be 'stopping the way,' and one or two people rush frantically out in violent haste; but for the most part the well-dressed bright-coloured throng stands contentedly looking about, in no hurry to be gone, nodding at distant and unget-at-able acquaintances over each other's heads, or merely staring at each other curiously or admiringly as occasion may demand.

Standing a good way back from the staircase, and very much jammed in between a fat paterfamilias with his flock behind him and two pretty-looking well-dressed women who are chattering together in front of him, stands a man who is evidently alone and almost a stranger to the scene in which he finds himself.

He looks vaguely round upon the crowd, and sees not one familiar face, not one kindly smile, not one friendly nod. Yes, there a remembered face goes by, and stares blankly, unknowingly at him as it passes—he is forgotten!

‘This is solitude—this is to be alone,’ he mutters to himself with a half cynical smile; ‘and people call this coming “home!”’ he added, and the smile died away into a sigh.

He is a striking-looking man, still in the prime of life, tall and upright, but with many hard lines which care as well as time have traced upon his bronzed and weather-beaten face. A certain superiority about the man, and a certain stamp of birth and breeding, cause the two women who are in front of him to turn round more than once to glance up at him.

‘Who is that?’ whispers one.

‘I don’t know,’ replies the other in the same tone; ‘he looks like somebody, but I don’t know that I ever saw him before.’

And then they forget him, and go on with their chattering aloud.

Suddenly a name spoken by one of them arrests the stranger’s attention.

‘Don’t you know who that is? Why, that is the beautiful Mrs. Travers, who is making such a sensation this season.’

‘Which—the dark one?’

‘Yes, the tall dark woman, with the diamonds and the black Spanish lace thrown over her head.’

‘How lovely she is!’

‘Yes, lovely enough. That little fair woman with her is Mrs. Dalmaine, her great friend. Don’t you remember the scandal there was about *her* two seasons ago?’

‘Oh, perfectly; you don’t mean to say she is here still! Why, there was to have been a divorce.’

‘Oh, it was all hushed up, and she goes about under Mrs. Travers’s wing now, so I suppose she is all right.’

‘And is that Mrs. Travers’s husband who is offering her his arm?’

‘Lor’ no, my dear! the husband never shows. They say he is a muff, or a misanthrope, or a savant, or something of that kind,’ answered the other; ‘at all events, he is never with his wife; that good-looking fellow is Lord George Mannersley—he has been dancing attendance upon her all the season; she never goes anywhere without him. It is really quite *dreadful* the way some

married women go on! If you and I were to do such things, my dear, everybody would cut us; but just because she is rich and the fashion, nobody seems to think anything of it. They say Lord George is over head and ears in love with her, and gives her such splendid presents; isn't it *shocking*! And Mrs. Robertson told me the other day that she had it from Lady Walters, who is very intimate with her, that she knows for a *fact*—hush, it would never do to say it aloud, but——' and the rest of the communication was delivered in a whisper. It was probably something very spicy, for the two ladies giggled, and then shook their heads with a little sham horror over it, as if to say 'Very sad, but how delightful a bit of scandal is! and even if it does take away an innocent woman's character, what does it signify, so long as it affords us a little amusement!'

And Hugh Fleming, standing behind them, an unwilling listener, heard it all.

Heard it; and then, following the direction of their eyes, saw her once again.

She was standing a little way up the staircase, leaning somewhat languidly against the wall; the woman who had been pointed out as Mrs. Dalmaine—a bright, lively little blonde, with a too straw-coloured chignon, and a suspicion of blacking about the eyebrows and eyelashes, stood chattering away merrily beside her, whilst in front of her, holding her fan, and fanning her at times with it, stood a remarkably handsome young man, with the deepest blue eyes, and the blackest of curly heads, and a long moustache. He was talking, seemingly, to Mrs. Dalmaine; but his eyes were riveted on the lovely face of Mrs. Travers. She took but little part in the conversation; every now and then she smiled, or put in a word or two, and at every instant she bowed her head gracefully to some one or other of her friends among the stream of people who passed along down the staircase.

She looked tired and slightly bored, and when 'Mrs. Travers's carriage' was shouted from below, and her footman appeared at the doorway, she took Lord George Mannersley's arm with alacrity, as if glad to be off.

Her name was so well known as a London beauty that not a few pressed forward to look at her as she passed out, and amongst them Colonel Fleming, too, pushed to the front rank. He stood close by the door through which she went out. He saw her sweet face, with all, and more than all, its well-remembered beauty, yet with a certain gravity and a certain hardness in the lines that were new to it; he had time to note the wistful, unsatisfied look in her dark eyes, and he heard her voice as she came past him.

'Won't you come to my rooms to supper? Do!' Lord George was saying to her, entreatingly. 'There is no reason why you should not. We have got Mrs. Dalmaine, and Castleton is sure to drop in to make a fourth. Don't be so cruel as to refuse.'

'I am afraid I must,' she answered, flushing a little at his eagerness. 'I am very tired to-night; I had rather go home.'

And then she passed close by him. There was a flash of the diamonds in her hair, and on her bosom; a whiff of the perfume from her bouquet; her rich black satin draperies brushed against his feet as she went by—he could have put out his hand to hold her back, she was so near—so near—and yet, alas! so very far.

Her carriage rolled away, and Hugh Fleming turned out alone into the crowded, squalid streets.

It was thus that he had met her again—the woman who had been his dream and his ideal ever since he had left her! The same, yet no longer the same—no longer the girl he remembered with the light of truth and candour in her eyes, with the best and highest instincts of womanhood shining out in her ever-varying face, but a woman who already wore the mask of hardness and worldliness, whose eyes had grown cold and unloving, whose laughter, as she passed by him, had sounded hollow and unreal.

And worse even than this—she was a woman whose doings had become talked and gossiped about, whose bosom friend was said to be of dubious reputation; whilst already the breath of scandal had coupled her own name with that of the worthless young profligate on whose arm he had seen her leaning.

Bitter, most bitter, were Hugh Fleming's reflections as he paced slowly along towards his club and thought on these things.

What had changed her? What had happened to her? Was this the result of the loveless marriage which he himself had urged upon her? Or was there other and deeper mischief still going on?

Still pondering on these things, Hugh Fleming stood back for an instant at a crossing in Berkeley Square, as a brougham, drawn by a showy-looking pair of horses, dashed by him.

It was Mrs. Travers's carriage. By the light of the lamps as it passed, he could see that Mrs. Dalmaine was no longer there; she had probably been dropped at her own house. There were only two people in the carriage—Mrs. Travers herself, and by her side Lord George Mannersley's handsome head bending forward and talking eagerly and animatedly to her.

Colonel Fleming saw them both perfectly, and then the brougham dashed by, and left him standing alone in the darkness of the empty street.

And as he stood there, there raged at his heart, one of the

original savage instincts which education and civilisation have no power to destroy in a man's breast—a fierce, murderous, maddening jealousy.

Women are supposed to have a monopoly of this same vice of jealousy; but the jealousy of a woman—far easier aroused, it is true—finds its vent in small spite, and malice, and back-biting. But for the good, strong, unadulterated flavour of the passion, commend me to the jealousy, just and excusable, of a man towards that other man who seeks to injure the fair fame of the woman whom he loves.

A man who is a prey to such a jealousy becomes, for the time, a savage or a wild beast.

As Hugh Fleming stood there, looking after Juliet's departing brougham, he could gladly, eagerly, joyfully have strangled the man who was sitting in it beside her. He would have blessed you or anyone else who would have given him the opportunity of trampling that dark clustering head in the mud of the gutter, and of quenching for ever the light in those deep blue eyes that, all unconscious of the murderous thoughts so near them, were feasting themselves on Juliet's beauty.

'And it was for this that I gave her up! My God, for this!' he muttered below his breath, as he strode on with all the fierce turmoil of bitter hatred surging within him.

Mrs. Travers's house in Upper Grosvenor Street was a *chef d'œuvre* of good taste and luxury. No money had been stinted in its furnishing and decoration; nothing had been spared that could add either to the refinement or to the comfort of every room in the house.

In Juliet Travers's drawing-room there were no masses of gilding, no heavy painted cornices, no crimson satin damask, no blaze of colour and vulgarity; no trace, in short, of the upholsterer's and the house-decorator's hand, to bewilder or to oppress you with suffocating grandeur.

Everywhere was harmony and fitness; sober colouring and fastidiousness of taste; rich dark draperies; luxurious couches, valuable pictures in Venetian frames mellowed by the glow of age, priceless old china, delicate Sèvres or quaintest Bristol and Worcester, set out by careful hands upon dark shelves and brackets; book-cases filled with every book that a lover of art or literature could desire; the piano covered with the best and highest style of music; whilst the reviews and magazines of the day found their places in a general and rather pleasant litter on the tables.

Nothing indicates so well the character of a woman as the room in which she is accustomed to live. Not all the emptiness of Juliet

Travers's present mode of life, not all the frivolity of most of her daily associates, could wholly obliterate that refinement of taste, that keen appreciation of all that is beautiful and improving to the mind, which a thoroughly well-educated woman, whatever may be her surroundings, retains more or less throughout her life.

Juliet's drawing-room in Grosvenor Street was like an essay on her own character—the good things were all there, but they were all left in disorder and confusion.

She is sitting at the writing-table on the morning after the opera, her pen in her hand, and a pile of invitation cards beside her, which Mrs. Dalmaine, at the corner of the table, is busy filling up, ticking the names off a long paper list as she does so, whilst Juliet leans back in her chair, and stares idly out of the window.

'How lazy you are, Juliet!' says Mrs. Dalmaine, who, we may as well charitably remark *en passant*, had never been anywhere near the precincts of the Divorce Court; although, for a fast young woman with an old husband, she had certainly done as many foolish and imprudent things as had sufficed to give a certain colour to sundry slanderous and utterly untrue reports about her. 'How lazy you are! Here you are, sitting staring at nothing, like a love-sick damsel, whilst I am slaving away in your service! Are the Blackwoods to be asked? What do you want a lot of old fogies filling up the rooms for? When I give a musical crush, if ever I do, I won't have a single woman over fifty in the room. What is the good of them? They are not ornamental, and they take up just the room of two ordinary people—these old women do so run to fat!'

'Nevertheless, I think I must ask the Blackwoods, Rosa,' answered Juliet, with a smile; 'they are old friends of my father's, and it is often difficult to show civility to old-fashioned people.'

'Well, certainly it is doing them off cheap, so here goes their card. By the way, have you had an answer from your professionals yet—that Miss Rudenbach?'

'Yes, here is her note—she comes. I cannot think what made Cecil of all people recommend her! he seemed quite eager about my engaging her—he hates music, you know!'

'Ah, my dear, you never can tell a man's motives!' answered Mrs. Dalmaine, with a knowing little nod, as she ran her pen through the Blackwoods' name on the list in front of her. 'You should never enquire too closely into a husband's fancies—you never can tell what the quietest of them are up to!'

'Nonsense!' said Juliet, rather impatiently. 'Have you finished that list, Rosa? Well, here is the next—the men.'

'Ah, how delightful! how I love men!' cried the little woman,



'HOW LAZY YOU ARE, CICI!'

applying herself with diligence to study the paper presented to her. 'Dear, delicious beings! not half of them will come, you know, Juliet; they never do, even to your parties, and you get more than most people. You will only get your own lovers—about a dozen or so.'

'What rubbish you do talk! I have no lovers, Rosa. I wish you would not say such things,' said Juliet, frowning a little angrily.

'No? Oh, I am sorry I used the word—what shall I call them—admirers—slaves—sweethearts? What do you call Lord George, for instance: a mixture of all three?'

'I am sick of Lord George!' cried Juliet, impatiently jumping up from the table and scattering her writing things on to the floor.

'And yet you would miss his attentions sorely if he withdrew them!' said Mrs. Dalmaine, who was not wanting in shrewdness. 'My dear girl, don't be absurd. We all know that you don't care a farthing for Lord George, but he is the best-looking man about town, and it gives you a *prestige* to be seen about with him, and all the women are dying with rage and envy of you. Believe me,' continued Mrs. Dalmaine, looking up solemnly at her friend, and speaking emphatically and slowly, as if she was laying down some grand moral maxim, 'believe me, there is no finer position in life than that of a woman who has succeeded in exciting the envy and the hatred of nine out of every ten of the women of her acquaintance—it's the finest position, Juliet: think what a success among the men it implies.'

Juliet could not help laughing. 'What morals you have, Rosa! and the best of it is, I really think you believe in what you say.'

'Why, of course I do!' answered Mrs. Dalmaine, opening her eyes. 'Why should I not? haven't I gone through it all, and don't I know what horrors those hateful women who never have any admirers themselves say of one, and haven't I got the whip hand of them all for ever? because I don't care one brass farthing what they say, and they know it. Don't you be a goose, Juliet; you keep your Lord George—you will find him very useful.'

'Well, there he is!' said Juliet, as a hansom dashed up to the door; 'so now I shall begin by making use of him to take you into the park this morning. I really cannot go, and you must both come back to luncheon. How d'ye do, Lord George? You and Mrs. Dalmaine must excuse my going out with you this morning, as I am so busy. Come back and lunch with me by-and-by, and you will find me in an idle and gossiping mood; just now I am up to my eyes in sending out invitations for my next musical.'

Of course there was an outcry at the idea of Juliet's not going with them, but it ended, as such disputes always did, in Juliet's

getting her own way; and her two friends went out together, Mrs. Dalmaine nothing loth to parade her handsome cavalier in the park, and Juliet was left alone.

After they had been gone about twenty minutes, however, the bright sunshine and fresh breeze looked so tempting that she remembered some trifling thing she wanted at a shop in Audley Street, and put on her bonnet to walk round to it.

Going downstairs she tapped at her husband's study door, and receiving no answer looked in. Cis lay full length on the sofa fast asleep, with a novel open on his chest. He opened his eyes as his wife came in, and began grumbling at being awakened.

'How lazy you are, Cis!' said Juliet, with scarce-concealed contempt, for her husband often spent his mornings thus. 'Get up, and put on your hat, and come out with me.'

'What should I go out with you for? You have got that horrid Dalmaine woman with you. She always laughs at me.'

'Don't abuse my friends, please! Besides, she is not here now. I am going out for ten minutes by myself; won't you come, Cis?' she added, in a conciliatory voice, laying her hand gently on his shoulder.

But Cis shook her off impatiently. 'You don't really want me—it is all sham; you don't care a farthing about me!' and he turned sulkily away from her.

'You are enough to try the patience of a saint, Cis!' said Juliet, stamping her foot; and she slammed the door angrily behind her, and went out alone.

This was all the companionship she got out of her husband! Fretful sulks and reproaches whenever she made the slightest advances to him. Was it not better to go her own way, and to leave him completely alone? Some impulse, she had not known what, had impelled her to turn to him this morning; perhaps it was Mrs. Dalmaine's worldly theories, or perhaps the frequent recurrence of those visits from Lord George Mannersley; but something, some good feeling, some better instinct, had prompted her for once to seek out her husband, and this had been the result of it!

Sore at heart, wounded in her pride and in her best feelings, Juliet walked along in the bright morning sunshine feeling very acutely what an utter mistake her whole life had been, how completely alone and unloved she was! Unavailing regrets, hopeless memories, rose bitterly in her heart. Half unconsciously, the name of Hugh Fleming escaped from her heart, and found utterance on her lips; and, as it did so, she turned the corner of the street—and met him face to face!

(To be continued.)

BELGRAVIA.

DECEMBER 1876.

GOOD STORIES OF MAN AND OTHER ANIMALS.

BY CHARLES READE.

8. *The Two Lear.*

GEOFFREY of Monmouth tells the old British legend of King Lear. Holinshed repeats it, and from him Shakespeare took it, and made the dry bones live. In that great master's hands the tale broadened and deepened. It became more tragical than the original record.

This is the outline of Shakespeare's story :—

King Lear, being old, and disposed to enjoy ease and dignity, without the cares of state, resolved to divide his kingdom amongst his three daughters; their names were Goneril, Duchess of Albany, Regan, Duchess of Cornwall, and Cordelia, unmarried, but courted by the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy, then a powerful monarch, though nominally vassal to the French King.

When it came to the division, the old King was weak enough to tell his daughters he should give the larger share to the one who loved him best, and should prove her love by words.

This was to invite cheap protestations, and, accordingly, two of the ladies, Goneril and Regan, vied in lip-love: Goneril said she loved him more than words could utter: yet she found words to paint filial love in tolerably glowing terms; for she went so far as to say that 'she loved him dearer than eye-sight, space, or liberty, and no less than honour, beauty, health, and life itself; ' with more to the same tune.

Regan could not soar above this; so she had the address to say that her sister had spoken her very mind, only she, Regan, went a little farther, and detested all other joys but that of filial love.

The royal parent believed all this, and then turned to his favourite, his youngest, and asked her what she could say to draw

from him a larger dowry than her sisters had just earned—with their tongues.

Cordelia. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing!

Cord. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

Cordelia was a little frightened at her father's anger; but she would only say that she loved her father as a daughter should: she obeyed him, loved him, honoured him, and thought it no merit, but a thing of course. She also declined frankly to believe that her sisters, who were wives, had no love for their husbands, only for their father; nor could she promise to reserve all her love for her father, and give none to the man she might wed.

The fact is, she being a woman, her sisters were such transparent humbugs to her, that it made her rather blunt in her honesty; and she did not gild the pill.

Lear. So young, and so untender?

Cord. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower.

He then went into a violent passion, and disowned her as his daughter, and ordered her from his presence, whilst he settled with his favoured daughters what retinue he was to have as a retired King, and where he was to live.

Afterwards, he sent for Cordelia, and the princes her suitors; he told them to her face he had disinherited her, and he used terms of invective so ambiguous, that Cordelia, who had borne all the rest in silence, now interfered, and appealed to his justice to tell those gentlemen she had lost his favour, not by any unchaste or dishonourable act, but for want of a greedy eye and a flattering tongue.

Lear evaded this remonstrance, and upbraided her again in general terms; but Cordelia's appeal was not lost upon her suitors. Burgundy, indeed, only offered to take her with the dowry originally proposed; and on the King refusing this, he declined her hand. But thereupon, this pitiable scene was redeemed by a trait of nobility.—France, who had come there for a rich dowry as well as a bride, was now fired with nobler sentiments, and welcomed a pearl of Womanhood, without land or money:

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;

Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised!

Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to our chance,

Is Queen of us, and ours, and our fair France:

Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy

Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.

Even this noble burst did not enlighten nor soften the impetuous old King, whose vanity had been publicly wounded. He

actually took the arm of Burgundy, the paltry Duke who had admitted he wooed the lady only for her substance, and he bade the only daughter who really loved him begone

Without his love, his grace, his benison.

France was as glad to have her as he to part with her, and so she disappeared, for a time, from the scene.

Now, the terms of Lear's retirement, which I alluded to above, were these: he was to retain the title of a King, and a retinue of a hundred Knights, to be kept at the expense of his regal daughters, and he, and that retinue, were to reside a month at a time with each Princess in turn.

He began his new life in the palace of his daughter Goneril.

He and his Knights soon became burdensome to that lady, and she made the most of every little offence. She resolved to shift him on to her sister, and gave insidious instructions to her major domo:

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question:
If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
Whose mind is mine. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
Which he hath given away!

These perfidious instructions bore fruit immediately. Goneril's head servant was insolent to Lear; the impetuous King beat him, and was soon after confronted by his daughter, who, to his amazement, took him to task in cold and lofty terms for his disorderly conduct, and that of his train. With regard to the latter, she told him plainly he must discharge one half of them, or she should do it for him.

This cool insolence, coming so soon after the violent protestations, put Lear in a fury.

Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses: call my train together.
Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee.
Yet have I left a daughter.

Goneril. You strike my people, and your disordered rabble
Make servants of their betters.

These two speeches alone may serve to show which was likely to prevail in this unnatural combat, the hot-headed, warm-hearted King, or his cold-blooded, iron daughter. Lear's rage broke into curses, but ended in tears that were like drops of blood from his wounded heart; and at last he turned away from that ungrateful serpent, and journeyed to the court of Regan.

But a letter from Goneril reached that palace before the ex-King, and he actually found some difficulty in obtaining an audience of his own daughter.

At last she and her husband met him, but outside the house.

At sight of her his swelling breast overflowed, and he told her her sister was ungrateful, and had struck him to the heart. 'O, Regan!' he sobbed.

Regan calmly begged him to be patient, and said he had misunderstood her sister: it was for his own good she had restrained the riots of his followers. She reminded him he was old, insinuated he was in his dotage, and needed the control of wiser people; and to conclude, she coolly advised him to return to her sister, and beg her pardon.

'What!' cried he, 'when she has abated me of half my train, looked black upon me, and struck her serpent fangs into my heart.' He then, in his rage, called down all manner of curses on his eldest daughter.

Says Regan, 'Why, you will be cursing me next.'

In the midst of this, who should arrive but Goneril and her attendants, on a visit to Regan.

Regan received her instantly with a cordiality she had not shown to her father and benefactor.

Lear was amazed at that, after what he had said, and exclaimed, 'O, Regan, will you take her by the hand?'

It was Goneril who replied to this, and with the most galling and contemptuous insolence.

Why not by the hand, sir: how have I offended?
All's not offence that indiscretion finds
And dotage terms so.

At this the poor old King prayed to Heaven for patience.

Regan paid no attention to that, but coldly stuck to her point. She advised him to comply with Goneril's terms, strike off half his Knights, and conclude his month. After that he could come to her. At present his visit would not be convenient.

Lear refused, hotly.

'As you please,' said Goneril, coldly.

Regan persisted, and said that, in fact, fifty followers were too many in another person's house. How could so many people, under two commands, hold amity?

Then Goneril put in her word. Why could he not be attended on by *their* servants?

'To be sure,' said Regan: 'then, if they were disrespectful, we could control them. At all events,' said she, 'when you come to me, bring no more than twenty-five.'

He asked her if that was her last word; she said it was. Then the poor old King said Goneril was better than she was. Yes, he would go back with Goneril, and dismiss half his retinue.

One would have thought these clever, heartless women had bandied the poor old man to and fro enough. But Goneril had no mercy: this was her reply, when he consented to her own proposition:—

Goneril.

Hear me, my lord.

What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Regan. What need *one*?

So they trumped each other's cards, and coldly drove him wild.

He raged, and stormed at them, unheeded. He wept with agony, unheeded. He left them both, and went forth into the stormy night, a houseless King, a banished father.

Crushed vanity is hard to bear. Wounded affection is hard to bear. Under the double agony the poor old King lost his reason, and wandered about the kingdom like a beggar.

Meantime his despised curses began to work, for his wicked daughters prepared their own chastisement, by their own crimes; and here the Poet has well shown that the hearts cold to divine affection could be hot with illicit love as well as spurred by greed.

But now it was reported in France how the old King had been abused, and Queen Cordelia, indignant, invaded the kingdom with a French army. Her emissaries found the poor King in a miserable condition, living in rags, and sleeping in outhouses and stables. She had him laid, all unconscious, on a fair bed in her own tent, with music softly playing, and her own physician waiting on him. She herself nursed him with deep anxiety for his waking.

All was changed. She who in his hour of pride and prosperity had said she loved him only as every daughter ought to love her father, now overflowed with passionate tenderness. She took his grey head to her filial bosom, and bemoaned him. 'Was this a face,' said she, 'to be opposed to the warring winds? On such a night, too!—why, I would have given shelter to my enemy's dog, though he had bitten me. And wast thou fain, poor father, to hovel thee with swine on musty straw?'

Whilst she was thus lamenting over him, the sore-tried King awoke; but not his memory. He thought he had been dead, and told them they did wrong to take him out of the grave where he rested from his sufferings. The happy change in his condition brought him no joy at first; it did but confuse and puzzle him. He looked at Cordelia, and saw she was a Queen: and tried to kneel to her. But she would not let him, and kneeled to him instead, and begged him to hold his hand over her and give her a parent's blessing. Seeing so great a lady at his feet craving his

blessing, let some light into his distracted mind, and drew from the once fiery old man sweet piteous words that have made many an eye wet :

Pray do not mock me ;

I am a very foolish, fond, old man,
Four-score and upward : and, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
This place I know not, nor these garments ;
I know not where I lodged last night. Do not laugh at me ;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

Cor.

And so I am, I am.

Then the poor soul, seeing her weep, bade her not cry, and offered to drink poison if she chose ; for he said she had far more reason to hate him than her sisters had.

But she soon convinced him of her love, and from that time they never parted.

At this very time Goneril and Regan died by poison and suicide, and so paid the forfeit of their crimes.

But all this was on the eve of a battle between the French and English forces, and in that battle, deplorable to relate, Cordelia was slain, and Lear mustered strength to kill her assassin, and then the last chord of his sore-tried heart gave way, and he died by the side of his loved daughter, who had professed so little, yet had done so much, and died for him.

This is the heart of Shakespeare's story. There is an inferior hand visible in parts of it : it is clogged with useless characters, and superfluous atrocities, and the death of Cordelia is revolting, and a sacrifice of the narrative to stage policy. But all that pertains directly to King Lear is exquisite, and so masterly, that the tale has extinguished the legend. Historically incorrect, it is true in art, all but the sacrifice of Cordelia, which, coupled with the other deaths, turns the theatre into a shambles, and, above all, disturbs the true motive of the tale. When the reader finds the sore-tried old man lying on a soft couch tended by Queen Cordelia, and when at last he knows her, and they mingle their tears and their love, the reader sees that this is the lightening before death, and the mad king has recovered his wits to be just to his one child, and then to fall asleep after life's fitful fever. Against such a tale so told, no previous legend can fight. Under such a spell you can neither conceive nor believe that Lear recovered his kingdom, and caroused again at the head of his knights, and toasted his one child. Youth may recover any wound ; but old age and royal vanity crushed and trampled on, and paternal love struck to the heart by the serpent's *tooth of filial ingratitude*, what should they do but rage and die ?

Yet there is a legend, almost as old as 'Lear,' of a father, whom his children treated as Goneril and Regan treated Lear; but he suffered and survived, and his heart turned bitter instead of breaking.

Of this prose Lear the story is all over Europe, and, like most old stories, told vilely. To that, however, there happens to be one exception, and the readers of this collection shall have the benefit of it.

In a certain part of Ireland, a long time ago, lived a wealthy old farmer; whose name was Brian Taafe. His three sons, Guillaum, Shamus, and Garret, worked on the farm. The old man had a great affection for them all; and, finding himself grow unfit for work, he resolved to hand his farm over to them and sit quiet by the fireside. But as that was not a thing to be done lightly, he thought he would just put them to their trial. He would first take the measure of their intelligence, and then of their affection.

Proceeding in this order he gave them each a hundred pounds, and quietly watched to see what they did with it.

Well, Guillaum and Shamus put their hundred pounds out to interest, every penny; but, when the old man questioned Garret where his hundred pounds was, the young man said, 'I spent it, father.'

'Spent it?' said the old man, aghast. 'Is it the whole hundred pounds?'

'Sure I thought you told us we might lay it out as we plaised.'

'Is that a reason ye'd waste the whole of it in a year, ye prodigal!' cried the old man, and he trembled at the idea of his substance falling into such hands.

Some months after this he applied the second test.

He convened his sons, and addressed them solemnly: 'I'm an ould man, my children; my hair is white on my head, and it's time I was giving over trade and making my sowl.' The two elder overflowed with sympathy. He then gave the dairy farm and the Hill to Shamus, and the meadows to Guillaum. Thereupon these two vied with each other in expressions of love and gratitude. But Garret said never a word, and this, coupled with his behaviour about the hundred pounds, so maddened the old man, that he gave Garret's portion, namely, the home and the home farm, to his elder brothers to hold in common. Garret he disinherited on the spot, and in due form. That is to say, he did not overlook him nor pass him by; but, even as spiteful testators used to leave the disinherited one a shilling, that he might not be able to say he had been inadvertently omitted, and it was all a mistake, old Brian

Taafe solemnly presented young Garret Taafe with a hazel staff and a small bag. Poor Garret knew very well what that meant. He shouldered the bag, and went forth into the wide world with a sad heart, but a silent tongue. His dog, Lurcher, was for following him, but he drove him back with a stone.

On the strength of this new arrangement, Guillaum and Shamus married directly, and brought their wives home, for it was a large house, and there was room for all.

But the old farmer was not contented to be quite a cipher, and he kept finding fault with this and that. The young men became more and more impatient of his interference, and their wives fanned the flame with female pertinacity. So that the house was divided, and a very home of discord.

This went on getting worse and worse, till at last, one winter afternoon, Shamus defied his father openly before all the rest; and said, 'I'd like to know what would please ye. May be ye'd like to turn us all out as you did Garret.'

The old farmer replied with sudden dignity, 'If I did, I'd take no more than I gave.'

'What good was your giving it?' said Guillaum; 'we get no comfort of it while you are in the house.'

'Do you talk that way to me, too?' said the father, deeply grieved. 'If it was poor Garret I had, he wouldn't use me so.'

'Much thanks the poor boy ever got from you,' said one of the women, with venomous tongue; then the other woman, finding she could count on male support, suggested to her father-in-law to take his stick and pack, and follow his beloved Garret. Sure he'd find him begging about the counthry.

At the women's tongues the wounded parent turned to bay.

'I don't wonder at anything I hear *ye* say. Ye never yet heard of anything good that a woman would have a hand in—only mischief always. If ye ask who made such a road, or built a bridge, or wrote a great hithory, or did a great action, you'll never hear it's a woman done it; but if there is a jewel with swords and guns, or two boys cracking each others' crowns with shillelahs, or a didly secret let out, or a character ruined, or a man brought to the gallows, or mischief made between a father and his own flesh and blood, then I'll engage you'll hear a woman had some call to it. We needn't have recorse to hithory to know your doins, 'tis undher our eyes; for 'twas the likes o' ye two burned Throy, and made the King o' Leinster rebel against Brian Boru.'

These shafts of eloquence struck home; the women set up a screaming, and pulled their caps off their heads, which in that part was equivalent to gentlefolks drawing their swords,

'Oh murther! murther! was it for this I married you, Guillaum Taafe?'

'Och, Shamus, will ye sit an' hear me compared to the likes? Would I rebel against Brian Boru, Shamus, a'ra gal?'

'Don't heed him, avourneen,' said Shamus; 'he is an ould man.' But she would not be pacified. 'Oh vo! vo! if ever I thought the likes 'ud be said of me, that I'd rebel against Brian Boru.'

As for the other, she prepared to leave the house. 'Guillaum,' said she, 'I'll never stay a day undher your roof with them as would say I'd burn Throy. Does he forget he ever had a mother himself? Ah! 'tis a bad apple, that is what it is, that despises the tree it sprung from.'

All this heated Shamus, so that he told the women sternly to sit down; for the offender should go, and upon that, to show they were of one mind, Guillaum deliberately opened the door. Lurcher ran out, and the wind and the rain rushed in. It was a stormy night.

Then the old man took fright, and humbled himself:

'Ah! Shamus, Guillaum, achree, let ye have it as ye will; I'm sorry for what I said, a'ra gal. Don't turn me out on the high road in my ould days, Guillaum; and I'll engage I'll niver open my mouth against one o' ye the longest day I live. Ah! Shamus, it isn't long I have to stay wid ye, any way. Yer own hair will be as white as mine yet, plaise God! and ye'll be thanking Him ye showed respect to mine this night.'

But they were all young and of one mind, and they turned him out and barred the door.

He crept away, shivering in the wind and rain, till he got on the lee side of a stone wall, and there he stopped and asked himself whether he could live through the night.

Presently something cold and smooth poked against his hand; it was a large dog that had followed him unobserved till he stopped. By a white mark on his breast he saw it was Lurcher, Garret's dog.

'Ah!' said the poor old wanderer, 'you are not so wise a dog as I thought, to follow me.' When he spoke to the dog, the dog fondled him. Then he burst out sobbing and crying: 'Ah, Lurcher! Garret was not wise, either; but he would niver have turned me to the door this bitter night, nor even thee.' And so he moaned and lamented. But Lurcher pulled his coat, and by his movements conveyed to him that he should not stay there all night; so then he crept on and knocked at more than one door, but did not obtain admittance, it was so tempestuous. At last he lay down exhausted on some straw in the corner of an outhouse; but Lurcher lay close to him, and it is probable the warmth of the dog saved his life that night.

Next day the wind and rain abated, but this aged man had other ills to fight against besides winter and rough weather. The sense of his sons' ingratitude and his own folly, drove him almost mad. Sometimes he would curse and thirst for vengeance, sometimes he would shed tears that seemed to scald his withered cheeks. He got into another county and begged from door to door. As for Lurcher, he did not beg; he used to disappear, often for an hour at a time, but always returned, and often with a rabbit or even a hare in his mouth. Sometimes the friends exchanged them for a gallon of meal, sometimes they roasted them in the woods; Lurcher was a civilized dog, and did not like them raw.

Wandering hither and thither, Brian Taafe came at last within a few miles of his own house; but he soon had cause to wish himself farther off it; for here he met his first downright rebuff, and, cruel to say, he owed it to his hard-hearted sons. One recognised him as the father of that rogue Guillaum Taafe, who had cheated him in the sale of a horse; and another as the father of that thief Shamus, who had sold him a diseased cow that died the week after. So, for the first time since he was driven out of his home, he passed the night supperless, for houses did not lie close together in that part.

Cold, hungry, houseless, and distracted with grief at what he had been and now was, nature gave way at last; and unable to outlast the weary, bitter night, he lost his senses just before dawn, and lay motionless on the hard road.

The chances were he must die; but just at Death's door his luck turned.

Lurcher put his feet over him and his chin upon his breast to guard him as he had often guarded Garret's coat, and that kept a little warmth in his heart; and at the very dawn of day the door of a farmhouse opened, and the master came out upon his business, and saw something unusual lying in the road a good way off. So he went towards it and found Brian Taafe in that condition. This farmer was very well to do, but he had known trouble, and it had made him charitable. He soon hallooed to his men and had the old man taken in; he called his wife, too, and bade her observe that it was a reverend face though he was all in tatters. They laid him between hot blankets, and, when he came to a bit, gave him warm drink, and at last a good meal. He recovered his spirits and thanked them with a certain dignity.

When he was quite comfortable, and not before, they asked him his name.

'Ah! don't ask me that,' said he, piteously. 'It's a bad name I have, and it used to be a good one, too. Don't ask me, or maybe you'll put me out, as the others did, for the fault of my two

sons. It is hard to be turned from my own door, let alone from other honest men's doors, through the vilyins,' said he.

So the farmer was kindly, and said: 'Never mind your name, fill your belly.'

But by and by the man went out into the yard, and then the wife could not restrain her curiosity. 'Why, good man,' said she, 'sure you are too decent a man to be ashamed of your name.'

'I'm too decent not to be ashamed of it,' said Brian. 'But you are right; an honest man should tell his name though they druv him out of heaven for it. I am Brian Taafe—that was.'

'Not Brian Taafe, the strong farmer at Corrans?'

'Ay, madam; I'm all that's left of him.'

'Have you a son called Garret?'

'I had, then.'

The woman spoke no more to him, but ran screaming to the door: 'Here, Tom! Tom! come here!' cried she; 'Tom! Tom!' As Lurcher, a very sympathetic dog, flew to the door and yelled and barked fiercely in support of this invocation, the hullabaloo soon brought the farmer running in.

'Oh, Tom! asthore,' cried she, 'it's Mister Taafe, the father of Garret Taafe, himself.'

'Oh, Lord!' cried the farmer, in equal agitation, and stared at him. 'My blessing on the day you ever set foot within these doors.' Then he ran to the door and hallooed: 'Hy, Murphy! Ellen! come here, ye divils!'

Lurcher supported the call with great energy. In ran a fine little boy and girl. 'Look at this man with all the eyes in your body!' said he. 'This is Misther Taafe, father of Garret Taafe, that saved us all from ruin and destruction entirely.' He then turned to Mr. Taafe, and told him a little more calmly, 'that years ago every haporth they had was going to be carted for the rent; but Garret Taafe came by, put his hand in his pocket, took out thirty pounds, and cleared them in a moment. It was a way he had; we were not the only ones he saved that way, so long as he had it to give.'

The old man did not hear these last words; his eyes were opened, the iron entered his soul, and he overflowed with grief and penitence.

'Och, murther, murther!' he cried. 'My poor boy! what had I to do at all to go and turn you adrift, as I done, for no raison in life!' Then, with a piteous apologetic wail, 'I tuck the wrong for the right; that's the way the world is blinded. Och! Garret, Garret, what will I do with the thoughts of it? An' those two vilyins that I gave it all to, and they turned me out in my ould days, as I done you; no matther!' and he fell into a sobbing and a trembling that nearly killed him for the second time.

But the true friends of his son Garret nursed him through that, and comforted him; so he recovered. But, as he did live, he outlived those tender feelings whose mortal wounds had so nearly killed him. When he recovered this last blow, he brooded and brooded, but never shed another tear.

One day, seeing him pretty well restored as he thought, the good farmer came to him with a fat bag of gold. 'Sir,' said he, 'soon after your son helped us, luck set in our way. Mary she had a legacy; we had a wonderful crop of flax, and with that plant 'tis kill or cure; and then I found lead in the hill, and they pay me a dale o' money for leave to mine there. I'm almost ashamed to take it. I tell you all this to show you I can afford to pay you back that thirty pounds, and if you please I'll count it out.'

'No!' said Mr. Taafe, 'I'll not take Garret's money; but if you will do me a favour, lend me the whole bag for a week, for at the sight of it I see a way to—— Whisper.'

Then, with bated breath and in strict confidence, he hinted to the farmer a scheme of vengeance. The farmer was not even to tell it to his wife, 'for,' said old Brian, 'the very birds carry these things about; and sure it is knowing devils I have to do with, especially the women.'

Next day the farmer lent him a good suit and drove him to a quiet corner scarce a hundred yards from his old abode. The old farmer got down and left him. Lurcher walked at his master's heels. It was noon and the sun shining bright.

The wife of Shamus Taafe came out to hang up her man's shirt to dry, when lo! scarce thirty yards from her, she saw an old man seated counting out gold on a broad stone at his feet. At first she thought it must be one of the good people—or fairies—or else she must be dreaming; but no! cocking her head on one side she saw for certain the profile of Brian Taafe, and he was counting a mass of gold. She ran in and screamed her news rather than spoke it.

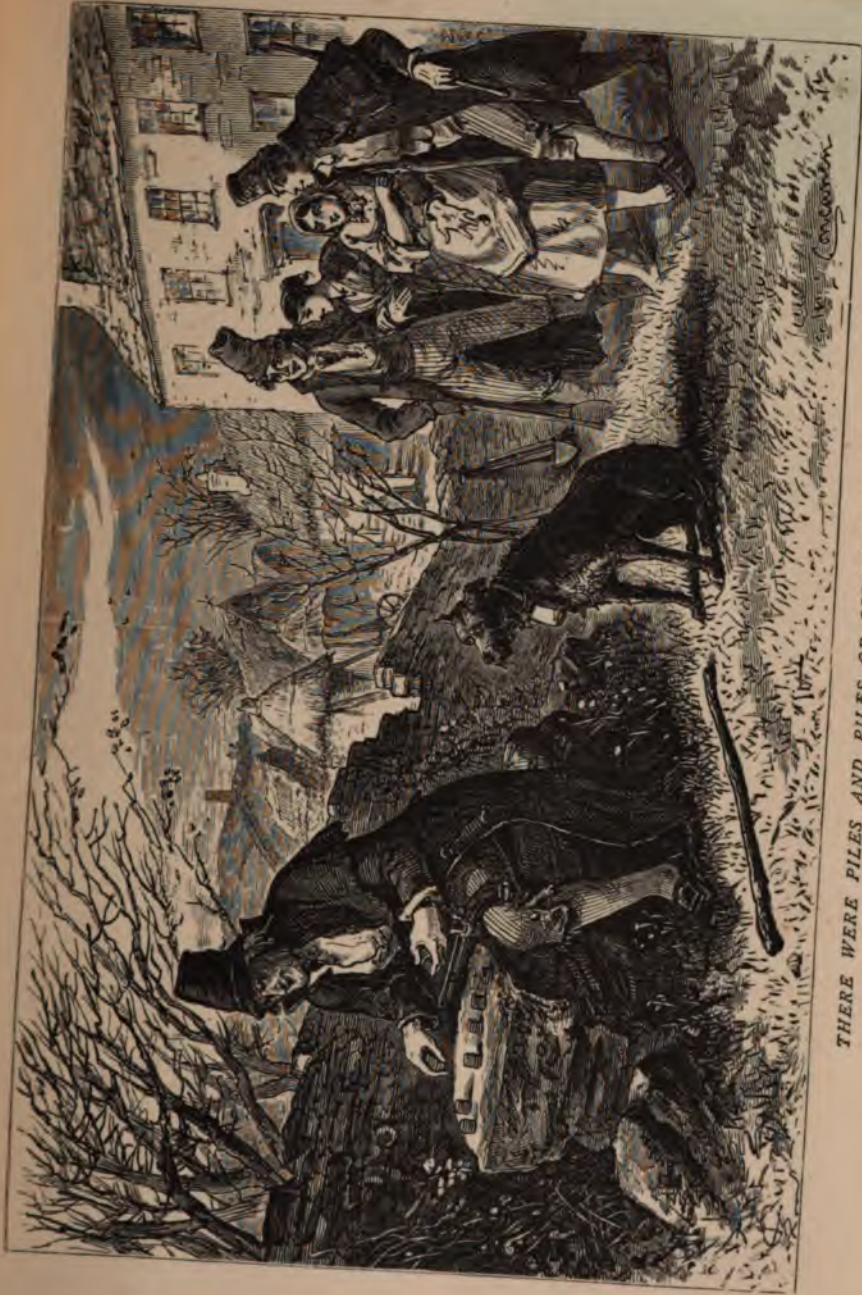
'Nonsense, woman!' said Shamus, roughly; 'it is not in nature.'

'Then go and see for yourself, man!' said she.

Shamus was not the only one to take this advice. They all stole out on tip-toe, and made a sort of semicircle of curiosity. It was no dream; there were piles and piles of gold glowing in the sun, and old Brian with a horse-pistol across his knees; and even Lurcher seemed to have his eyes steadily fixed on the glittering booty.

When they had thoroughly drunk in this most unexpected scene, they began to talk in agitated whispers; but even in talking they never looked at each other, their eyes were glued on the gold.

Said Guillaum: 'Ye did very wrong, Shamus, to turn out the



THERE WERE PILES AND PILES OF GOLD GLOWING IN THE SUN.

old father as you done; see now what we all lost by it. That's a part of the money he laid by, and we'll never see a penny of it.'

The wives whispered that was a foolish thing to say: 'Leave it to us,' said they, 'and we'll have it all one day.'

This being agreed to, the women stole towards the old man, one on each side. Lurcher rose and snarled, and old Brian hurried his gold into his ample pockets and stood on the defensive.

'Oh, father! and is it you come back? Oh! the Lord be praised. Oh, the weary day since you left us, and all our good luck wid ye!'

Brian received this and similar speeches with fury and reproaches. Then they humbled themselves, and wept; cursed their ill-governed tongues, and bewailed the men's folly in listening to them. They flattered him and cajoled him, and ordered their husbands to come forward and ask the old man's pardon, and not let him ever leave them again. The supple sons were all penitence and affection directly. Brian at last consented to stay, but stipulated for a certain chamber with a key to it: 'For,' said he, 'I have got my strong box to take care of, as well as myself.'

They pricked up their ears directly at mention of the strong box, and asked where it was.

'Oh! it is not far, but I can't carry it; give me two boys to fetch it.'

'Oh! Guillaum and Shamus would carry it or anything else to oblige a long-lost father.'

So they went with him to the farmer's cart, and brought in the box, which was pretty large, and above all very full and heavy.

He was once more king of his own house, and flattered and petted as he had never been since he gave away his estate. To be sure he fed this by mysterious hints that he had other lands besides those in that part of the country, and that indeed the full extent of his possessions would never be known until his will was read; which will was safely locked away in his strong box—*with other things*.

And so he passed a pleasant time, embittered only by regrets, and very poignant they were, that he could hear nothing of his son Garret. Lurcher also was taken great care of, and became old and lazy.

But shocks, that do not kill, undermine; before he reached threescore and ten, Brian Taafe's night-work and troubles told upon him, and he drew near his end. He was quite conscious of it, and announced his own departure, but not in a regretful way. He had become quite a philosopher; and indeed there was a sort of chuckle about the old fellow in speaking of his

own death, which his daughters-in-law secretly denounced as unchristian, and what was worse, unchancy.

Whenever he did mention the expected event, he was sure to say, 'And mind, boys, my will is in that chest.'

'Don't spake of it, father,' was the reply directly.

When he was dying, he called for both his sons, and said in a feeble voice. 'I was a strong farmer, and come of honest folk. Ye'll give me a good wakin', boys, an' a gran' funeral.'

They promised this very heartily.

'And after the funeral ye'll all come here together, and open the will, the children an' all. All but Garret. I've left him nothing, poor boy, for sure he's not in this world. I'll maybe see him where I'm goin'.'

So there was a grand wake, and the virtues of the deceased and his professional importance were duly howled by an old lady, who excelled in this lugubrious art. Then the funeral was hurried on, because they were in a hurry to open the chest.

The funeral was joined in the churchyard by a stranger, who muffled his face, and shed the only tears that fell upon that grave. After the funeral he stayed behind all the rest, and mourned, but he joined the family at the feast which followed, and behold it was Garret, come a day too late. He was welcomed with exuberant affection, not being down in the will; but they did not ask him to sleep there. They wanted to be alone, and read the will. He begged for some reminiscence of his father, and they gave him Lurcher. So he put Lurcher into his gig, and drove away to that good farmer, sure of his welcome, and praying God he might find him alive. Perhaps his brothers would not have let him go so easily had they known he had made a large fortune in America, and was going to buy quite a slice of the county.

On the way he kept talking to Lurcher, and reminding him of certain sports they had enjoyed together, and feats of poaching they had performed. Poor old Lurcher kept pricking his ears all the time, and cudgelled his memory as to the tones of the voice that was addressing him. Garret reached the farm, and was received first with stares, then with cries of joy, and was dragged into the house so to speak. After the first ardour of welcome, he told them he had arrived only just in time to bury his father; 'and this old dog,' said he, 'is all that's left me of him. He was mine first, but when I left, he took to father; he was always a wise dog.'

'We know him,' said the wife, 'he has been here before'—and she was going to blurt it all out, but her man said, 'Another time!' and gave her a look as black as thunder; which wasn't his way at all, but he explained to her afterwards: 'They are friends,

those three, over the old man's grave. We should think twice, before we stir ill blood betune 'em.' So when he stopped her, she turned it off cleverly enough, and said the dear old dog must have his supper. Supper they gave him, and a new sheepskin to lie on by the great fire. So there he lay, and seemed to dose.

The best bed in the house was laid for Garret, and, when he got up to go to it, didn't that wise old dog get up too with an effort, and move stiffly towards Garret, and lick his hand; then he lay down again all of a piece, as who should say, 'I'm very tired of it all.' 'He knows me now at last,' said Garret, joyfully. 'That is his way of saying good-night, I suppose. He was always a wonderful wise dog.'

In the morning they found Lurcher dead and stiff on the sheepskin. It was a long good-night he had bid so quietly to the friend of his youth.

Garret shed tears over him, and said, 'If I had only known what he meant, I'd have sat up with him. But I never could see far. He was a deal wiser for a dog than I shall ever be for a man.'

Meantime the family party assembled in the bedroom of the deceased. Every trace of feigned regret had left their faces, and all their eyes sparkled with joy and curiosity. They went to open the chest. It was locked. They hunted for the key; first quietly, then fussily. The women found it at last, sewed up in the bed; they cut it out and opened the chest.

The first thing they found was a lot of stones. They glared at them, and the colour left their faces. What devilry was this?

Presently they found writing on one stone, 'Look below.' Then there was a reaction, and a loud laugh. 'The old fox was afraid the money and parchments would fly away, so he kept them down.'

They plunged their hands in, and soon cleared out a barrowful of stones; till they came to a kind of paving stone. They lifted this carefully out, and discovered a good new rope with a running noose, and—the will.

It was headed in large letters finely engrossed.

'THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF BRIAN TAAFE.'

But the body of the instrument was in the scrawl of the testator.

I bequeath all the stones in this box to the hearts that could turn their father and benefactor out on the highway that stormy night.

I bequeath this rope for any father to hang himself with, who is fool enough to give his property to his children before he dies.

This is a prosaic story compared with the Lear of Shakespeare, but it is well told by Gerald Griffin, who was a man of genius.

Of course I claim little merit but that of setting the jewels. Were I to tell you that is an art, I suppose you would not believe it.

I have put the two stories together, not without a hope that the juxtaposition may set a few intelligent people thinking. It is very interesting, curious, and instructive, to observe how differently the same events operate upon men who differ in character; and perhaps 'the two Lears' may encourage that vein of observation; its field is boundless.

Her Answer.

ALL day long she held my question
 In her heart;
 Shunned my eyes that craved an answer,
 Moved apart;
 Touched my hand in Good-night greeting,
 Rosier grew,—
 'Should I leave to-morrow?—early?
 Then Adieu!
 Bent her head in Farewell courteous,
 Onward passed,
 Whilst a cold hand gripped my heart-strings,
 Held them fast.
 Still I waited, still I listened;
 All my soul
 Trembled in the eyes that watched her
 As she stole
 Up the stairs with measured footsteps.
 But she turned
 Where a lamp in brazen bracket
 Brightly burned,
 Showed me all the glinting ripples
 Of her hair,
 Veiled her eyes in violet shadows,—
 Glimmered where
 Curved her mouth in soft compliance
 As she bent
 Towards me from the dusky railing
 Where she leant.
 Ah, my love! One white hand wanders
 To her hair,
 Slowly lifts the rose that nestles
 Softly there;
 Breathes she in its heart my answer
 Shyly sweet,
 And Love's message mutely flutters
 To my feet.



HER ANSWER.

Astrology.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

‘This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters the sun, moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treacherous by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil, by a divine thrusting on.’—SHAKESPEARE (*King Lear*).

THOUGH we can understand that in old times the planets and stars were regarded as exercising very potent influences upon the fates of men and nations, it is by no means easy to understand how astrologers came to assign to each planet its special influence. That is, it is not easy to understand how they could have been led to such a result by actual reasoning, still less by any process of observation. Indeed, there are few things more remarkable, or to reasoning minds more inexplicable, than the readiness with which men undertook in old times, and even now undertake, to interpret omens and assign prophetic significance to casual events. One can understand that foolish persons should believe in omens, and act upon the ideas suggested by their superstitions. The difficulty is to comprehend how these superstitions came into existence. For instance, who first conceived the idea that a particular line in the palm of the hand is the line of life; and what can possibly have suggested so absurd a notion? To whom did the thought first present itself that the pips on playing-cards are significant of future events; and why did he think so? How did the ‘grounds’ of a teacup come to acquire that deep significance which they now possess for Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig? If the believers in these absurdities be asked *why* they believe, they answer readily enough either that they themselves or their friends have known remarkable fulfilments of the ominous indications of cards or tea-dregs (which must of necessity be the case where millions of forecasts are daily made by these instructive methods). But the persons who first invented those means of divination can have had no such reasons. They must have possessed imaginations of singular liveliness and not wanting in ingenuity. It is a pity that we know so little of them. In the case of astrology, however, there was a certain scientific basis for the belief in the possibility

of determining the special influences of the stars; and we should have expected to find some scientific process adopted for the purpose. Yet, so far as can be judged, the influences assigned to the planets depended on entirely fanciful considerations. In some cases we seem almost to see the line along which the fancies of the old astrologers led them, just as in some cases we can perceive how mythological superstitions (which are closely related to astrological ideas) had their origin; though it is not quite clear whether the planets were first regarded as deities with special qualities, and these qualities afterwards assigned to the planetary influences, or whether the planetary influences were first assigned, and came eventually to be regarded as the qualities of the deities associated with the several planets.

It is easy, for instance, to understand why astrologers should have regarded the sun as the emblem of kingly power and dignity, and equally easy to understand why, to the sun regarded as a deity, corresponding qualities should have been ascribed; but it is not easy to determine whether the astrological or the Sabaistic superstitions were the earlier. And in like manner of the moon and planets. There seems to me no sufficient evidence in favour of Whewell's opinion, that, 'in whatever manner the sun, moon, and planets came to be identified with gods and goddesses, the characters ascribed to these gods and goddesses regulated the virtues and powers of the stars which bear their names.' As he himself very justly remarks, 'We do not possess any of the speculations of the earlier astrologers; and we cannot, therefore, be certain that the notions which operated in men's minds when the art had its birth, agreed with the views on which it was afterwards defended.' He does not say why he infers that, though at later periods supported by physical analogies, it was originally suggested by mythological beliefs. Quite as probably mythological beliefs were suggested by astrological notions. Some of these beliefs, indeed, seem manifestly to have been so suggested, as the character of the deity Mercury from the rapid motions of the planet Mercury, and the difficulty of detecting it; the character of Mars from the blood-red hue of the planet when close to the horizon, and so forth.

Let us examine, however, the characteristics ascribed by astrologers to various planets.

It is unfortunate for astrology that, despite the asserted careful comparison of events with the planetary positions preceding and indicating them, nothing was ever observed which seemed to suggest the possibility that there may be an unknown planet ruling very strongly the affairs of men. Astrologers tell us now that Uranus is a very potent planet; yet the old astrologers seem to

have got on very well without him. By the way, one of the moderns, the grave Raphaël, gives a very singular account of the discovery of Uranus, in a book published sixteen years before Neptune was discovered by just such a process as Raphaël imagined in the case of Uranus. He says that Drs. Halley, Bradley, and others, having frequently observed that Saturn was disturbed in his motion by some force exerted from beyond his orbit, and being unable to account for the disturbance on the known principles of gravitation, pursued their inquiry into the matter, 'till at length the discovery of this hitherto unknown planet covered their labours with success, and has enabled us to enlarge our present solar system to nearly double its bounds.' Of course there is not a word of truth in this; Uranus having been discovered by accident long after Halley and Bradley were in the grave. But the account suggests what might have been, and curiously anticipates the actual manner in which Neptune was discovered. Astrologers agree in attributing evil effects to Uranus; but what he does of evil is always in a peculiarly strange, unaccountable, and totally unexpected manner: he causes the native born under his influence to be of a very eccentric and original disposition, romantic, unsettled, addicted to change, a seeker after novelty; though, if the moon or Mercury have a good aspect towards Uranus, the native will be profound in the secret sciences, magnanimous, and lofty of mind. But let all beware of marriage when Uranus is in the seventh house, or afflicting the moon. And in general, let the fair sex remember that Uranus is peculiarly hostile to them, and very evil in love.

Saturn is the Greater Infortune of the old system of astrology, and is by universal experience acknowledged to be the most potent, evil, and malignant of all the planets. Those born under him are of dark and pale complexion, with small black leering eyes, thick lips and nostrils, large ears, thin face, lowering looks, cloudy aspect, and seemingly melancholy and unhappy; and though they have broad shoulders, they have but small lips and a thin beard. They are in character austere and reserved, covetous, laborious, and revengeful; constant in friendship, and good haters. The most remarkable and certain characteristic of the Saturnine man is that, as an old author observes, 'he will never look thee in the face.' 'If they have to love any one, these Saturnines,' says another old author, 'they love most constantly; and if they hate, they hate to the death.' The persons signified symbolically by Saturn are grandparents, and other old persons, day labourers, paupers, beggars, clowns, husbandmen of the meaner sort, and especially undertakers, sextons, and gravediggers. Chaucer thus

presents the chief effects which Saturn produces in the fortunes of men and nations—Saturn himself being the speaker :—

. . . . quod Saturne
 My cours, that bath so wide for to turne,
 Hath more power than wot any man.
 Min is the drenching in the sea so wan,
 Min is the prison in the derke cote,
 Min is the strangel and hanging by the throte,
 The murmure and the cherles rebelling,
 The groyning, and the prive empoysoning,
 I do vengauce and pleine correction,
 While I dwell in the signe of the leon ;
 Min is the ruine of the high halles,
 The falling of the toures and of the walles
 Upon the minour or the carpenter :
 I slew Sampson in shaking the piler.
 Min ben also the maladies colde,
 The derke tresous, and the castes olde :
 My loking is the fader of pestilence.

Jupiter, on the contrary, though Saturn's next neighbour in the solar system, produces effects of an entirely contrary kind. He is, in fact, the most propitious of all the planets, and the native born under his influence has every reason to be jovial in fact as he is by nature. Such a native will be tall and fair, handsome and erect, robust, ruddy, and altogether a good-looking person, whether male or female. The native will also be religious, or, at least, a good moral honest man, unless Jupiter be afflicted by the aspects of Saturn, Mars, or Uranus, in which case he may still be a jolly fellow, no man's enemy but his own—only he will probably be his own enemy to a very considerable extent, squandering his means and ruining his health by gluttony and intoxication. The persons represented by Jupiter (when he is not afflicted) are judges, counsellors, church dignitaries, from cardinals to curates, scholars, chancellors, barristers, and the highest orders of lawyers, woollen drapers (possibly there may be some astral significance in the woolsack) and clothiers. When Jupiter is afflicted, however, he denotes quacks and mountebanks, knaves, cheats, and drunkards. The influence of the planet on the fortunes is nearly always good. Astrologers, who to a man reverence dignities, consider Great Britain fortunate in that the lady whom, with customary effusion, they term 'Our Most Gracious Queen,' was born when Jupiter was riding high in the heavens near his culmination, this position promising a most fortunate and happy career. The time has passed when the fortunes of this country were likely to be affected by such things; but we hope, for the lady's own sake, that this prediction has been fulfilled. Astrologers assert the same about

the Duke of Wellington, assigning midnight, May 1, 1769, as the hour of his birth. There is some doubt both as to the date and place of the great soldier's birth; but the astrologer finds in the facts of his life the means of removing all such doubts.¹

Next in order comes Mars, inferior only in malefic influence to Saturn, and called by the old astrologers the Lesser Infortune. The native born under the influence of Mars is usually of fierce countenance, his eyes sparkling, or sharp and darting, his complexion fiery or yellowish, and his countenance scarred or furrowed. His hair is reddish or sandy, unless Mars chances to be in a watery sign, in which case the hair will be flaxen, or in an earthly sign, in which case the hair will be chestnut. The Martialist is broad-shouldered, steady, and strong, but short,² and often bony and lean. In character the Martialist is fiery and choleric, naturally delighting in war and contention, but generous and magnanimous. This when Mars is well aspected: should the planet be evil aspected, then will the native be treacherous, thievish, treasonable, cruel, and wicked. The persons signified by Mars are generals, soldiers, sailors (if he is in a watery sign), surgeons, chemists, doctors, armourers, barbers, carriers, smiths, carpenters, bricklayers, sculptors, cooks, and tailors. When afflicted with Mercury or the moon, he denotes thieves, hangmen, and 'all cut-throat people.' In fact, except the ploughboy, who belongs to Saturn, all the members of the old septet, 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, apothecary, ploughboy, thief,' are favourites with Mars. The

¹ Wellington lived too long for the astrologers, his death within the year having unfortunately been predicted by them many times during the last fifteen years of his life. Some astrologers were more cautious, however. I have before me his horoscope, carefully calculated, *secundum artem*, by Raphaël in 1828, with results 'sufficiently evincing the surprising verity and singular accuracy of astrological calculations, when founded on the correct time of birth, and mathematically calculated. I have chosen,' he proceeds, 'the nativity of this illustrious native, in preference to others, as the subject is now living, and, consequently, all possibility of making up any fictitious horoscope is at once set aside; thus affording me a most powerful shield against the insidious representations of the envious and ignorant traducer of my sublime science.' By some strange oversight, however, Raphaël omits to mention anything respecting the future fortunes of Wellington, showing only how wonderfully Wellington's past career had corresponded with his horoscope.

² 'I have still observed,' says an old author, 'that your right Martialist, doth seldom exceed in height, or be at the most above a yard and a half in height' (which is surely stint measure). 'It hath been always thus,' said that right Martialist Sir Geoffrey Hudson to Julian Peveril; 'and in the history of all ages, the clean tight dapper little fellow hath proved an overmatch for his burly antagonist. I need only instance, out of Holy Writ, the celebrated downfall of Goliath, and of another lubbard, who had more fingers in his hand, and more inches to his stature, than ought to belong to an honest man, and who was slain by a nephew of good King David; and of many others whom I do not remember; nevertheless, they were all Philistines of gigantic stature. In the classics, also, you have Tydeus, and other tight compact heroes, whose diminutive bodies were the abode of large minds.'

planet's influence is not quite so evil as Saturn's, nor are the effects produced by it so long-lasting. 'The influence of Saturn,' says an astrologer, 'may be compared to a lingering but fatal consumption; that of Mars to a burning fever.' He is the cause of anger, quarrels, violence, war, and slaughter.

The sun comes next; for it must be remembered that, according to the old system of astronomy, the sun was a planet. Persons born under the sun, as the planet ruling their ascendant, would be more apt to be aware of the fact than Saturnine, Jovial, Martial, or any other folk, because the hour of birth, if remembered, at once determines whether the native is a solar subject or not. The solar native has generally a round face (like pictures of the sun in old books of astronomy), with a short chin; his complexion somewhat sanguine; curling sandy hair, and a white tender skin. As to character he is bold and resolute, desirous of praise, of slow speech and composed judgment; outwardly decorous, but privately not altogether virtuous. The sun, in fact, according to astrologers, is the natural significator of respectability, for which I can discover no reason unless it be that the sun travelling always in the ecliptic has no latitude, and so solar folk are allowed none; when the sun is ill aspected, the native is both proud and mean, tyrannical and sycophantic, exceedingly unamiable, and generally disliked because of his arrogance and ignorant pomposity. The persons signified by the sun are emperors, kings, and titled folk generally, goldsmiths, jewellers, and coiners; when 'afflicted,' the sun signifies pretenders either to power or knowledge. The sun's influence is not in itself either good or evil, but is most powerful for good when he is favourably aspected and for evil when he is afflicted by other planets.

Venus, the next in order, bore the same relation to the Greater Fortune Jupiter, which Mars bore to Saturn the Greater Ill-fortune. She was the Lesser Fortune, and her influence was in nearly all respects benevolent. The persons born under the influence of this planet are handsome, with beautiful sparkling hazel or black eyes (but another authority assigns the subject of Venus 'a full eye, usually we say goggle-eyed,' by which we do not usually imply beauty), ruddy lips, the upper lip short, soft smooth hair, dimples in the cheek and chin, an amorous look and a sweet voice. One old astrologer puts the matter thus pleasantly:—'The native of Venus hath,' quoth he, 'a love-dimple in the chin, a lovely mouth, cherry lips, and a right merry countenance.' In character the native of Venus is merry 'to a fault,' but of temper engaging, sweet and cheerful, unless she be ill aspected, when her native is apt to be too fond of pleasure and amusement. That her influence is

good is shown (in the opinion of Raphaël, writing in 1828) by the character of George IV., 'our present beloved monarch and most gracious majesty, who was born just as this benevolent star' was in the ascendant; 'for it is well known to all Europe what a refined and polished genius, and what exquisite taste, the King of England possesses, which therefore may be cited as a most illustrious proof of the celestial science; a proof likewise which is palpably demonstrable, even to the most casual observer, since the time of his nativity is taken from the public journals of the period, and cannot be gainsaid.' 'This illustrious and regal horoscope is replete with wonderful verifications of planetary influence, and England cannot but prosper while she is blessed with the mild and beneficent sway of this potent monarch.' Strengthened in faith by this convincing proof of the celestial science, we proceed to notice that Venus is the protectrice of musicians, embroiderers, perfumers, classic modellers, and all who work in elegant attire or administer to the luxuries of the great; but when she is afflicted, she represents 'the lower orders of the votaries of voluptuousness.'

Mercury is considered by astrologers 'a cold, dry, melancholy star.' The Mercurial is neither dark nor fair, but between both, long-faced, with high forehead and thin sharp nose, 'thin beard, (many times none at all), slender of body, and with small weak eyes;' long slender hands and fingers are 'especial marks of Mercury,' says Raphaël. In character the Mercurial is busy and prattling. But when well affected, Mercury gives his subjects a strong, vigorous, active mind, searching and exhaustive, a retentive memory, a natural thirst for knowledge.¹ The persons signified by Mercury are astrologers, philosophers, mathematicians, politicians, merchants, travellers, teachers, poets, artificers, men of science, and all ingenious clever men. When he is ill affected, however, he represents pettifoggers, cunning vile persons, thieves, messengers, footmen, and servants, &c.

The moon comes last in planetary sequence, as nearest to the earth. She is regarded by astrologers as a cold, moist, watery, phlegmatic planet, variable to an extreme, and, like the sun, partaking of good or evil according as she is aspected favourably or the reverse. Her natives are of good stature, fair, and pale, moon-faced, with grey eyes, short arms, thick hands and feet, smooth, corpulent and phlegmatic body. When she is in watery signs, the native has freckles on the face, or, says Lilly, 'he or she is

¹ It is likely that Swedenborg in his youth studied astrology, for in his visions the Mercurial folk have this desire of knowledge as their distinguishing characteristic.

blub-cheeked, not a handsome body, but a muddling creature.' Unless the moon is very well aspected, she ever signifies an ordinary vulgar person. She signifies sailors (not as Mars does, the fighting-men of war-ships, but nautical folk generally) and all persons connected with water or any kind of fluid; also all who are engaged in inferior and common offices.

We may note, in passing, that to each planet a special metal is assigned, as also particular colours. Chaucer, in the *Chanones Yemannes' Tale*, succinctly describes the distribution of the metals among the planets:—

Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars iren, Mercurie silver we clepe:
Saturnus led, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus coper, by my [the Chanones Yemannes'] faderkin.

The colours are thus assigned:—to Saturn, black; to Jupiter, mixed red and green; to Mars, red; to the sun, yellow or yellow-purple; to Venus, white or purple; to Mercury, azure blue; to the moon, a colour spotted with white and other mixed colours.

Again, the planets were supposed to have special influence on the seven ages of human life. The infant, 'mewling and puking in the nurse's arms,' was very appropriately dedicated to the moist moon; the whining schoolboy (did schoolboys whine in the days of good Queen Bess?) was less appropriately assigned to Mercury, the patron of those who eagerly seek after knowledge; then, very naturally, the lover sighing like furnace was regarded as the special favourite of Venus. Thus far the order has been that of the seven planets of the ancient astrology, in supposed distance. Now, however, we have to pass over the sun, finding Mars the patron of mid life, appropriately (in this respect) presiding over the soldier full of strange oaths, and so forth; the 'justice in fair round belly with good capon lined' is watched over by the respectable sun; maturer age by Jupiter; and, lastly, old age by Saturn.

Colours were also assigned to the twelve zodiacal signs—to Aries, white and red; to Taurus, white and lemon; to Gemini, white and red (the same as Aries); to Cancer, green or russet; to Leo, red or green; to Virgo, black speckled with blue; to Libra, black, or dark crimson, or tawny colour; to Scorpio, brown; to Sagittarius, yellow, or a green sanguine (this is as strange a colour as the *gris rouge* of Molière's *L'Avare*); Capricorn, black or russet, or a swarthy brown; to Aquarius, a sky-coloured blue; to Pisces, white glistening colour (like a fish just taken out of the water).

The chief fixed stars had various influences assigned to them

by astrologers. These influences were mostly associated with the imaginary figures of the constellations. Thus the bright star in the head of Aries, called by some the Ram's Horn, was regarded as dangerous and evil, denoting bodily hurts. The star Menkar in the Whale's jaw denoted sickness, disgrace, and ill fortune, with danger from great beasts. Betelgeux, the bright star on Orion's right shoulder, denoted martial honours or wealth; Bellatrix, the star on Orion's left shoulder, denoted military or civic honours; Rigel, on Orion's left foot, denoted honours; Sirius and Procyon, the greater and lesser Dog Stars, both implied wealth and renown. Star clusters seem to have portended loss of sight; at least we learn that the Pleiades were 'eminent stars,' but denoting accidents to the sight or blindness, while the cluster Præsepe or the Beehive in like manner threatened blindness. The cluster in Perseus does not seem to have been noticed by astrologers. The variable star Algol or Caput Medusæ, which marks the head of Gorgon, was accounted 'the most unfortunate, violent, and dangerous star in the heavens.' It is tolerably clear that the variable character of this star had been detected long before Montanari (to whom the discovery is commonly attributed) noticed the phenomenon. The name Algol is only a variation of Al-ghûl, the monster or demon, and it cannot be doubted that the demoniac, Gorgonian character assigned to this star was suggested by its ominous change, as though it were the eye of some fierce monster slowly winking amid the gloom of space. The two stars called the Aselli, which lie on either side the cluster Præsepe, 'are said' (by astrologers) 'to be of a burning nature, and to give great indications of a violent death, or of violent and severe accidents by fire. The star called Cor Hydræ, or the serpent's heart, denotes trouble through women (said I not rightly that astrology was a masculine science?); the Lion's heart, Regulus, implied glory and riches; Deneb, the Lion's tail, misfortune and disgrace. The southern scale of Libra meant bad fortune, while the northern was eminently fortunate.

Astrology was divided into three distinct branches—the doctrine of nativities, horary astrology, and state astrology. The first assigned the rules for determining the general fortunes of the native, by drawing up his scheme of nativity or casting his horoscope. It took into account the positions of the various planets, signs, stars, &c., at the time of the native's birth; and as the astrologer could calculate the movements of the planets thereafter, he could find when those planets which were observed by the horoscope to be most closely associated with the native's fortunes would be well aspected or the reverse. Thus the auspicious and

unlucky epochs of the native's life could be predetermined. The astrologer also claimed some degree of power to rule the planets, not by modifying their movements in any way, but by indicating in what way the ill effects portended by their positions could be prevented. The Arabian and Persian astrologers, having less skill than the followers of Ptolemy, made use of a different method of determining the fortunes of men, not calculating the positions of the planets for many years following the birth of the native, but assigning to every day after his birth a whole year of his life, and for every two hours' motion of the moon one month. Thus the positions of the stars and planets, twenty-one days after the birth of the native, would indicate the events corresponding to the time when he would have completed his twenty-first year. There was another system, called the Placidian, in which the effects of the positions of the planets were judged with sole reference to the motion of the earth upon her axis. It is satisfactory to find astrologers in harmony amongst each other as to these various methods, which one would have supposed likely to give entirely different results. 'Each of them,' says a modern astrologer, 'is not only correct and approved by long-tried practice, but may be said to defy the least contradiction from those who will but take the pains to examine them (and no one else should deliver an opinion upon the subject). Although each of the above methods are different, yet they by no means contradict each other, but each leads to *true results*, and in many instances they each lead to the foreknowledge of the same event; in which respect they may be compared to the ascent of a mountain by different paths, where, although some paths are longer and more difficult than others, they notwithstanding all lead to the same object.' All which, though plausible in tone, labours under the disadvantage of being untrue.

Ptolemy is careful to point out, in his celebrated work the 'Tetrabiblos,' that, of all events whatsoever which take place after birth, the most essential is the continuance of life. 'It is useless,' he says, 'to consider what events might happen to the native in later years if his life does not extend, for instance, beyond one year. So that the inquiry into the duration of life takes precedence of all others.' In order to deal properly with this question, it is necessary to determine what planet shall be regarded as the Hyleg, Apheta, or Lord of Life, for the native. Next the Anareta, or Destroyer of Life, must be ascertained. The Anaretic planets are, by nature, Saturn, Mars, and Uranus, though the sun, moon, and Mercury may be endowed with the same fatal influence, if suitably afflicted. The various ways in which the Hyleg, or Giver

of Life, may be afflicted by the Anareta, correspond to the various modes of death. But astrologers have always been singularly careful, in casting horoscopes, to avoid definite reference to the native's death. There are but few cases where the actual day of death is said to have been assigned. One is related in Clarendon's 'History of the Rebellion.' He tells us that William Earl of Pembroke died at the age of fifty, on the day upon which his tutor Sandford had predicted his decease. Burton, the author of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' having cast his own horoscope, and ascertained that he was to die on January 23rd, 1639, is said to have committed suicide in order that the accuracy of his calculations might not be called in question. A similar story is related of Cardan by Dr. Young (Sidrophel Vapulans), on the authority of Gassendi, who, however, says only that either Cardan starved himself, or, being confident in his art, took the predicted day for a fatal one, and by his fears made it so. Gassendi adds that while Cardan pretended to describe the fates of his children in his voluminous commentaries, he all the while never suspected, from the rules of his great art, that his dearest son would be condemned in the flower of his youth to be beheaded on a scaffold by an executioner of justice, for destroying his own wife by poison.

Horary astrology relates to particular questions, and is a comparatively easy branch of the science. The art of casting nativities requires many years of study; but horary astrology 'may be well understood,' says Lilly, 'in less than a quarter of a year.' 'If a proposition of any nature,' he adds, 'be made to any individual, about the result of which he is anxious, and therefore uncertain whether to accede to it or not, let him but note the hour and minute when it was *first* made, and erect a figure of the heavens, and his doubts will be instantly resolved. He may thus in five minutes learn whether the affair will succeed or not; and consequently whether it is prudent to accept the offer made or not. If he examine the sign on the first house of the figure, the planet therein, or the planet ruling the sign, *will exactly describe the party making the offer*, both in person and character, and this may at once convince the inquirer for truth of the reality of the principles of the science. Moreover, the descending sign, &c. *will describe his own person and character*—a farther proof of the truth of the science.'

There is one feature of horary astrology which is probably almost as ancient as any portion of the science, yet which remains even to the present day, and will probably remain for many years to come. I refer to the influence which the planets were supposed to exert on the successive hours of every day—a belief from which the

division of time into weeks of seven days each unquestionably had its origin,—though we may concede that the subdivision of the lunar month into four equal parts was also considered in selecting this convenient measure of time. Every hour had its planet: and, dividing twenty-four by seven, we get three and three over; whence, each day containing twenty-four hours, it follows that in each day the complete series of seven planets was run through three times, and three planets of the next series were used. Now the order of the planets was that of their distances, as indicated above. Saturn came first, then Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon. Beginning with Saturn, as ruling the first hour of Saturn's day (Saturday), we get through the above series three times, and have for the last three hours of the day, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. Thus the next hour, the first hour of the next day, belongs to the sun—Sunday follows Saturday. We again run three times through the series, and the three remaining hours are governed by the sun, Venus, and Mercury—giving the moon as the first planet for the next day. Monday thus follows Sunday. The last three hours of Monday are ruled by the moon, Saturn, and Jupiter; leaving Mars to govern the next day—*Martis dies*, *Mardi*, Tuesday or *Tuisco's day*. Proceeding in the same way, we get Mercury for the next day, *Mercurii dies*, *Mercredi*, Wednesday or *Woden's day*; Jupiter for the next day, *Jovis dies*, *Jeudi*, Thursday or *Thor's day*; Venus for the next day, *Veneris dies*, *Vendredi*, Friday or *Freya's day*; and so we come to Saturday again.¹

The period of seven days, which had its origin in and derived

¹ It is singular that, when there is this perfectly simple explanation of the origin of the nomenclature of the days of the week, an explanation given by ancient historians and generally received, Whewell should have stated that 'various accounts are given, all the methods proceeding upon certain arbitrary arithmetical processes connected in some way with astrological views.' Speaking of the arrangement of the planets in the order of their supposed distances, and of the order in which the planets appear in the days of the week, he says, 'It would be difficult to determine with certainty why the former order was adopted, and how and why the latter was derived from it.' But, in reality, there is no difficulty about either point. The former arrangement corresponded precisely with the periodic times of the seven planets of the old Egyptian system (unquestionably far more ancient than the system adopted by the Greeks), while the latter springs directly from the former. Assign to the hours of the day successively the seven planets in the former order, continuing the sequence without interruption day after day, and in the course of seven days each one of the planets will have ruled the first hour of a day, in the order,—Saturn, the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus. What arbitrary arithmetical process there is in this, it would be difficult to conceive. Arithmetic does not rule the method at all. Nor has any other method ever been suggested; though this method has been presented in several ways, some arithmetical and some geometrical. We need then have no difficulty in understanding what seems so perplexing to Whewell, the universality, namely, of the notions 'which have produced this result,' for the notions were not fantastic, but such as naturally sprang from the ideas on which astrology itself depends.

its nomenclature from astrological ideas, shows by its wide prevalence how widely astrological superstitions were once spread among the nations. As Whewell remarks (though, for reasons which will readily be understood, he was by no means anxious to dwell upon the true origin of the Sabbatical week), 'the usage is found over all the East; it existed among the Arabians, Assyrians, and Egyptians. The same week is found in India, among the Brahmins; it has there also its days marked by the names of the heavenly bodies; and it has been ascertained that the same day has, in that country, the name corresponding with its designation in other nations. . . . The period has gone on without interruption or irregularity from the earliest recorded times to our own days, traversing the extent of ages, and the revolutions of empires; the names of ancient deities, which were associated with the stars, were replaced by those of the objects of the worship of our Teutonic ancestors, according to their views of the correspondence of the two mythologies; and the Quakers, in rejecting these names of days, have cast aside the most ancient existing relic of astrological as well as idolatrous superstition.'

Not only do the names remain, but some of the observances connected with the old astrological systems remain even to this day. As ceremonies derived from Pagan worship are still continued, though modified in form and with a different interpretation, in Christian and especially Roman Catholic observances, so among the Jews and among Christians the rites and ceremonies of the old Egyptian and Chaldean astrology are still continued, though no longer interpreted as of yore. The great Jewish Lawgiver and those who followed him seem, for example, to have recognised the value of regular periods of rest (whether really required by man, or become a necessity through long habit), but to have been somewhat in doubt how best to continue the practice in thus sanctioning the superstitions with which it had been connected. At any rate, two different and inconsistent interpretations were given in the earlier and later codes of law. But whether the Jews accepted the Sabbath because they believed that an All-powerful Being, having created the world in six days, required and took rest ('and was refreshed') on the seventh, as stated in Exodus (xxii. and xxx. 17), or whether they did so in remembrance of their departure from Egypt, as stated in Deuteronomy (v. 15), there can be no question that among the Egyptians the Sabbath or Saturn's day was a day of rest because of the malignant nature of the powerful planet-deity who presided over that day. Nor can it be seriously doubted that the Jews, descended from the old Chaldeans, among whom (as appears from stone inscriptions recently dis-

covered) the very word Sabbath was in use for a seventh day of rest connected with astrological observances, were familiar with the practice even before their sojourn in Egypt. They had then probably regarded it as a superstitious practice to be eschewed, like those idolatrous observances which had caused Terah to remove with Abraham and Lot from Ur of the Chaldees. At any rate, we find no mention of the seventh day of rest as a religious observance until after the Exodus.¹ It was not their only religious observance having in reality an astrological origin. Indeed, if we examine the Jewish sacrificial system, as described in Numbers xxviii. and elsewhere, we shall find throughout a tacit reference to the motions or influences of the celestial bodies. There was the morning and evening sacrifice guided by the movements of the sun; the Sabbath offering, determined by the predominance of Saturn; the offering of the new moon, depending on the motions of the moon; and lastly, the Paschal sacrifice, depending on the combined movements of the sun and moon—made in fact, during the lunation following the sun's passage of the equator at the rising sign of Aries.

Let us return, however, after this somewhat long digression, to astrological matters.

Horary astrology is manifestly much better fitted than the casting of nativities for filling the pocket of the astrologer himself; because only one nativity can be cast, but any number of horary questions can be asked. It is on account of their skill in horary astrology that the Zadkiels of our own time have occasion-

¹ The following remarks by the Astronomer-Royal on this subject seem to me just, in the main, what I had said earlier in my essay on Saturn and the Sabbath of the Jews ('Our Place among Infinities,' 11th essay). 'The importance which Moses attached to [the hebdomadal rest] is evident; and, with all reverence, I recognise to the utmost degree the justice of his views. No direction was given for religious ceremonial' (he seems to have overlooked Numbers xxviii. 9, and cognate passages), 'but it was probably seen that the health given to the mind by a rest from ordinary cares, and by the opportunity of meditation, could not fail to have a most beneficial religious effect. But, to give sanction to this precept, the authority of at least a myth was requisite. I believe it was simply for this reason that the myth of the six days of creation was preserved. It is expressly cited, in the first delivery of the commandments, as the solemn authority (Exodus xxxi. 17) for the command. It is remarkable that at the second mention of the commandment (Deuteronomy v.), no reference is made to the creation; perhaps, after the complete establishment of Jehovistic ideas in the minds of the Israelites, they had nearly lost the recollection of the Elohistic account, and it was not thought desirable to refer to it' (Airy, 'On the Early Hebrew Scriptures,' p. 17). It must be regarded as a singular instance of the persistency of myths, if this view be correct, that a myth which had become obsolete for the Jews between the time of Moses and that of the writer (whoever he may have been) who produced the so-called Mosaic book of Deuteronomy, should thereafter have been revived, and have come to be regarded by the Jews themselves and by Christians as the Word of God.

ally found their way into the twelfth house, or house of enemies. Even Lilly himself, not devoting, it would seem, five minutes to inquire into the probable success of the affair, was indicted in 1655 by a half-witted young woman, because he had given judgment respecting stolen goods, receiving two shillings and sixpence, contrary to an Act made under and provided by the wise and virtuous King James First of England and Sixth of Scotland.

State astrology relates to the destinies of kingdoms, thrones, empires, and may be regarded as a branch of horary science relating to subjects (and rulers) of more than ordinary importance.

In former ages all persons likely to occupy an important position in the history of the world had their horoscopes erected; but in these degenerate days neither the casting of nativities nor the art of ruling the planets flourishes as it should do. Our Zadkiels and Raphaëls publish indeed the horoscopes of kings and emperors, princes and princesses, and so forth; but their fate is as that of Benedict (according to Beatrice)—men ‘wonder they will still be talking, for nobody marks them.’ Even those whose horoscopes have been erected show no proper respect for the predictions made in their behalf. Thus the Prince of Wales being born when Sagittarius was in the ascendent should have been, according to Zadkiel, a tall man, with oval face, ruddy complexion, somewhat dusky, and so forth; but I understand he has by no means followed these directions as to his appearance. The sun, being well aspected, prognosticated honours—a most remarkable and unlooked-for circumstance, strangely fulfilled by the event; but then, being in Cancer, in sextile with Mars, the Prince of Wales was to be partial to maritime affairs and even naval glory, whereas as a field-marshal he can only win military glory. (I would not be understood to say that he is not quite as competent to lead our fleets as our battalions into action.) The house of wealth was occupied by Jupiter, aspected by Saturn, which betokened great wealth through inheritance—a prognostication, says Professor Miller, which is not unlikely to come true. The house of marriage was unsettled by the conflicting influences of Venus, Mars, and Saturn; but the first predominating, the Prince, after some trouble in his matrimonial speculations, was to marry a Princess of high birth, and one not undeserving of his kindest and most affectionate attention, probably in 1862. As to the date, an almanac informs me that the Prince married a Danish Princess in March 1863, which looks like a most culpable neglect of the predictions of our national astrologer. Again, in May 1870, when Saturn was stationary in the ascending degree, the Prince ought to have been injured by a horse, and also to have received a blow on the left side

of the head, near the ear; but reprehensibly omitted both these ceremonies. A predisposition to fever and epileptic attacks was indicated by the condition of the house of sickness. The newspapers described two or three years ago a serious attack of fever; but as most persons have some experience of the kind, the fulfilment of the prediction can hardly be regarded as very wonderful. Epileptic attacks, which, as less common, might have saved the credit of the astrologers, have not visited 'this royal native.' The position of Saturn in Capricorn betokened loss or disaster in one or other of the places ruled over by Capricorn—which, as we have seen, are India, Macedonia, Thrace, Greece, Mexico, Saxony, Wilna, Mecklenburgh, Brandenburg, and Oxford. Professor Miller expresses the hope that Oxford was the place indicated, and the disaster nothing more serious than some slight scrape with the authorities of Christchurch. But princes never get into scrapes with college dons. Probably some one or other of the 'hair-breadth 'scapes' chronicled by the reporters of his travels in India was the event indicated by the ominous position of Saturn in Capricorn.

A remarkable list of characteristics were derived by Zadkiel from the positions of the various planets and signs in the twelve houses of the 'royal-native.' Some, of course, were indicated in more ways than one, which will explain the parenthetical notes in the following alphabetical table which Professor Miller has been at the pains to draw up from Zadkiel's predictions. The Prince was to be 'acute, affectionate, amiable, amorous, austere, avaricious, beneficent, benevolent, brave, brilliant, calculated for government' (a quality which may be understood two ways), 'candid, careful of his person, careless, compassionate, courteous (twice over), delighting in eloquence, discreet, envious, fond of glory, fond of learning, fond of music, fond of poetry, fond of sport, fond of the arts and sciences, frank, full of expedients, generous (three times), gracious, honourable, hostile to crime, impervious, ingenious inoffensive, joyous, just (twice), laborious, liberal, lofty, magnanimous, modest, noble, not easy to be understood (!), parsimonious, pious (twice), profound in opinion, prone to regret his acts, prudent, rash, religious, reverent, self-confident, sincere, singular in mode of thinking, strong, temperate, unreserved, unsteady, valuable in friendship, variable, versatile, violent, volatile, wily, and worthy.' Zadkiel concludes thus:—'The square of Saturn to the moon will add to the gloomy side of the picture, and give a tinge of melancholy at times to the native's character, and also a disposition to look at the dark side of things, and lead him to despondency; nor will he be at all of a sanguine

character, but cool and calculating, though occasionally rash. Yet, all things considered, though firm and sometimes positive in opinion, this royal native, if he live to mount the throne, will sway the sceptre of these realms in moderation and justice, and be a pious and benevolent man, and a merciful sovereign.' Fortunately, the time has long since passed when swaying the sceptre of these realms had any but a figurative meaning, or when Englishmen who obeyed their country's laws depended on the mercy of any man, or when even bad citizens were judged by princes. But we still prefer that princes should be well-mannered gentlemen, and therefore it is sincerely to be hoped that Zadkiel's prediction, so far as it relates to piety and benevolence, may be fulfilled, should this 'royal native' live to mount the throne. As for mercy, it is a goodly quality even in these days and in this country; for if the law no longer tolerates cruelty to men, even on the part of princes, who once had prescribed rights in that direction, there are still some cruel, nay, brutal sports in which 'royal natives' might sometimes be tempted to take part. Wherefore let us hope that, even in regard to mercy, the predictions of astrologers respecting this 'royal native' may be fulfilled.

Passing, however, from trivialities, let us consider the lessons which the history of astrology teaches us respecting the human mind, its powers and weaknesses. It has been well remarked by Whewell that for many ages 'mysticism in its various forms was a leading character both of the common mind and the speculations of the most intelligent and profound reasoners. Thus mysticism was the opposite of that habit of thought which science requires, 'namely, clear ideas, distinctly employed to connect well-ascertained facts; inasmuch as the ideas in which it dealt were vague and unstable, and the temper in which they were contemplated was an urgent and aspiring enthusiasm, which could not submit to a calm conference with experience upon even terms.' We have seen what has been the history of one particular form of the mysticism of ancient and mediæval ages. If we had followed the history of alchemy, magic, and other forms of mysticism, we should have seen similar results. True science has gradually dispossessed science falsely so called, until now none but the weaker minds hold by the tenets formerly almost universally adopted. In mere numbers, believers in the ancient superstitious may be by no means insignificant; but they no longer have any influence. It has become a matter of shame to pay any attention to what those few say or do who not merely hold but proclaim the ancient faith in these matters. We can also see why this has been. In

old times enthusiasm usurped the place of reason in these matters ; but opinions so formed and so retained could not maintain their ground in the presence of reasoning and experience. So soon as intelligent and thoughtful men perceived that facts were against the supposed mysterious influences of the stars, the asserted powers of magicians, the pretended knowledge of alchemists, the false teachings of magic, alchemy, and astrology, were rejected. The lesson thus learned respecting erroneous doctrines which were once widely prevalent has its application in our time, when, though the influence of those teachings has passed away, other doctrines formerly associated with them still hold their ground. Men in old times influenced by erroneous teachings wasted their time and energies in idle questionings of the stars, vain efforts to find Arcana of mysterious power, and to acquire magical authority over the elements. Is it altogether clear that in these our times men are not hampered, prevented to some degree from doing all the good they might do in the short life-time allotted to them, by doctrines of another kind ? Is there in our day no undue sacrifice of present good in idle questionings ? is there no tendency to trust in a vain fetishism to prevent or remove evils which energy could avert or remedy ? The time will come, in my belief, when the waste of those energies which in these days are devoted (not merely with the sanction, but the high approval, of some of the best among us) to idle aims, will be deplored as regretfully—but, alas, as idly—as the wasted speculations and labours of those whom Whewell has justly called the most intelligent and profound reasoners of the ‘stationary age’ of science. The words with which Whewell closes his chapter on the ‘Mysticism of the Middle Ages’ have their application to the mysticism of the nineteenth century :—‘Experience collects her stores in vain, or ceases to collect them, when she can only pour them into the flimsy folds of the lap of Mysticism, who is, in truth, so much absorbed in looking for the treasures which are to fall from the skies, that she heeds little how scantily she obtains, or how loosely she holds, such riches as she might find beside her.’

Joshua Haggard's Daughter.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JOSHUA'S CONFESSION.

ANOTHER bright June morning; newly-blown roses looking in at the open windows, born, like the butterflies, for a day. Naomi was astir earlier than usual, after a sleepless night, full of care for her father. Oh, if that sweet air of heaven, which is a joy in itself for the happy, could but blow away one's sense of abiding trouble, could but bring the promise of relief! This was what Naomi thought, as she stood at her open window, looking out at the calm hill-tops, from which the summer mists were rising, like a veil slowly unfolded by invisible hands.

She was at her father's door before six o'clock, knocking and waiting his reply with fast-throbbing heart, fearing she knew not what. There was no answer. She felt the floor reeling under her feet. Awful fears seized upon her. She knocked loudly, violently almost, and still no answer. She tried the door with shaking hands, expecting to find it locked, as it had been yesterday evening when she came to inquire about the light; but it yielded under her hand, and she went into her father's room.

It was empty. She looked round with wild eager eyes, almost beside herself in the agony of that great dread. The room was quite empty. The bed had been lain upon; the candle had been left burning, and had burned down to the brazen socket. There was a letter lying on the escritoire, which Naomi seized upon eagerly. It was addressed to herself.

She tore it open, still full of fear; for the letter might reveal some terrible determination. There was another letter inside, sealed, and addressed to Captain Pentreath.

My beloved Daughter,—I am going to Penmoyle to seek my wife, and shall return to Combhaven no more. My duty there is done. I have taught my people to know the right path. I can give them up into the hands of a new minister. I am going where the darkness has never been dispelled by Gospel light: I am going to find new duties in desolate places. But first I must see my wife. I would pardon and bless her before I go. Do not follow me. My lot is fixed.

Do not fail to give the enclosed letter, with the seal unbroken, into Captain Pentreath's hands.

Your affectionate father,

JOSHUA HAGGARD.

Naomi lifted up her heart in thankfulness. He had gone to do no wicked and desperate act. He had gone to seek his wife, carrying with him pardon and love. The ice had melted. Who could tell what healing for mind and soul there might be in the change?

But this letter to be delivered to Arnold Pentreath? Here was a fearful thought. What if it were a confession of her father's guilt—a confession which would put his life in Arnold's power? And Arnold had already shown himself merciless. To withhold the letter would be to disobey her father's express command. To deliver it might be to endanger his life. What was she to do?

She sat by the escritoire with the letter in her hand, perplexed in the extreme. Then, finding thought useless to show her the way, she fell upon her knees and prayed for guidance, prayed long and earnestly.

She rose from this prayer resolved, whether for good or ill, to obey her father's behest, and deliver the letter, trusting to God's mercy and her own influence with Arnold for the issue. He had pretended to love her—nay, had loved her—before this fearful discovery of his brother's fate. She must have some power over him still; her pleading must be of some avail. Yes, she would obey her father, and in so doing proclaim her trust in Providence.

"Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies," said Naomi. "Can I doubt that my father is in God's hands to-day, though men may seem to have the ordering of his fate?"

She lost no time in carrying out her determination, but went back to her room and put on her bonnet, and then ran downstairs.

She was going out at the street-door when it suddenly occurred to her that her father's absence must speedily be discovered, and would make a commotion in the house if it were in no manner accounted for. So she went to the kitchen, where her aunt was employed in her usual morning duty of giving out provisions for the day's consumption from a rigorously locked store-room.

To her Naomi quietly announced that her father had started early that morning on his way to Penmoyle to see his wife.

"Started early!" cried Judith incredulously. "Why, the

Truro coach doesn't go before half-past seven, and it's not a quarter-past yet. What do you mean by started early?'

'He may have set out to walk part of the journey, perhaps, aunt,' answered Naomi. 'You know how fond he is of walking. He was gone at six o'clock when I went to his room, and had left me a letter to say he was going to Penmoyle.'

'I think he might have written to me,' said Judith, with her offended air. 'If he must needs go off at a moment's notice, throwing all the housekeeping into a muddle—you needn't roast the mutton to-day, Sally; the cold beef will be good enough for us—he might at least have had the civility to address his explanation to me. After keeping his house nearly thirty years, it's hard to have such a slight put on me.'

'The beef, mum!' remonstrated Sally; 'there's hardly anything but bones.'

'Nonsense, girl; there's plenty of picking between the bones. And, if I've time, I'll make a treacle pudding.'

Naomi vanished while the dinner was under discussion. Her heart was very heavy as she went to the Grange. She had not entered the house since the days when she had been Oswald's plighted wife, and the future layfair before her, full of the promise of happiness. And to-day there was a thought of horror in the very road by which she went. Twice had her murdered lover been carried along that road; and now he was lying quietly in his grave, and all earthly hopes lay buried with him.

The old house looked peaceful enough in the cheerful morning light. Gardens and shrubberies had been better kept since Arnold's return. The beds and borders were full of sweet-smelling flowers. The windows were all open, and a handsome red setter—a favourite of Arnold's—was lying in the porch.

Naomi rang the noisy old bell, which was answered after a longish pause by Nicholas the butler, who came across the hall, carrying his master's breakfast on one of those old silver trays which had been kept under lock and key during the Squire's lifetime, but which the less careful sailor had given out for daily use.

At sight of Naomi the old man stopped short, with a startled look.

'Lord, miss, how you skeared me!' he exclaimed.

'Can I see your master, Nicholas?'

'To be sure 'ee can, miss. He's to his break'ust in the blue parlour—the room that was Squire's study, you know; but the harkiteck had it all routed out and painted.'

The butler opened the door of that small room on the left hand

of the porch, and ushered Naomi into the presence of Captain Pentreath.

He started up with a cry, half of surprise, half of welcome, as if only to see her were in itself so glad a thing, that he forgot all the painful circumstances of their meeting. This oblivion lasted but for a moment. His face clouded, and he looked at her deprecatingly.

‘Naomi, I have been longing for such a meeting as this. I want to tell you—to make you understand, if I can—that in what I have done I have been constrained by my duty to the dead. Had your father wronged me—that wrong the deepest one man could do another—I would have endured all for your sake; but my duty to the dead is sacred. At the hazard of breaking your heart, with the certainty of losing your regard, I was forced to do what I did.’

‘Hush!’ she said; ‘do not speak of me or my feelings. You have brought great misery upon us—an irreparable shame. It may be in your power to work still greater misery for us. I can but do *my* duty to God and my father. My first duty to both is obedience. I have brought you a letter.’

‘A letter?’

‘From my father. But, before I give it you, promise that you will make no evil use of it, that you will not make his own words the means of destroying him. I cannot tell what he has written. I know that all yesterday his mind was sorely disturbed—that he has been oppressed and troubled in mind for a long time. How can I tell what he has written? Promise me that you will not use this letter against him.’

‘I promise,’ answered Arnold, with a touch of scorn. ‘It is not likely that a letter which your father writes to me of his own free will can prove a weapon with which to strike him.’

He opened the letter, prepared to find an artful and studied composition setting forth the minister’s innocence of the crime charged against him, a plausible and subtle defence, such as the ingenuity of a clever and thoughtful man might elaborate at his leisure. The paper almost dropped from his hand as he read the first line:

Arnold Pentreath, you accused me rightly. It was this hand slew your brother. But the deed was not so basely done as you think. We stood face to face, each with his weapon in his hand. It was what the sons of Belial call an honourable meeting, though my conscience tells me it was murder. He stole my young wife’s heart—came between me and the most perfect happiness that Heaven ever vouchsafed to man. I met him with my wife’s kiss still warm upon his lip. I had seen them part, mind you, as lovers whose hearts are cloven asunder in parting. I told him that he owed me his life, and he was

willing to admit the debt. 'My life is of so little value that you are heartily welcome to it,' he said; 'I have often thought of taking it myself.' He had a pair of pistols about him, and proposed that we should fight on the spot; but withdrew his proposal the next moment, remembering that I had no practice in the use of firearms.

I told him I was willing to set my want of skill against his bad cause. 'It is you that are the wrongdoer,' I cried; 'Heaven will be on my side.'

We fought, and he fell. I was alone with his dead body, and all the horror of my position was suddenly revealed to me. According to my own creed I was a murderer; and in the sight of the world I should stand revealed as a murderer if I were found with this dead man by my side.

Satan, who had made me blind to the guilt of my act till it was accomplished, now tempted me to the baseness of concealment. I dragged the body to the edge of the shaft and threw it down, and went quickly home, and kept silence about your brother's fate till the day I spoke of him with you.

I told you that in my opinion your brother had committed suicide. I say still that he flung his life recklessly away. Had he pleaded or argued with me, my blind passion might have been subjugated. He put the weapon which killed him into my hand.

God rest his soul, and pardon my sin!

I am going forth to a life as desolate as that of St. John in the desert. May God so appoint my punishment here that I may not lose my portion in glory hereafter!

JOSHUA HAGGARD.

Naomi stood before Captain Pentreath with ashen lips, watching him as he read the letter, praying dumbly all the while, and with that sense of efficacy in her prayers, even in this moment of suspense, which only an implicit faith can experience.

'Thank God!' exclaimed Arnold, giving her the letter; 'thank God it is not so bad as I believed! This confession has the stamp of truth; and—he is your father!'

No words can tell the depth of tenderness in that little speech and the look that went with it.

Both look and tone were lost on Naomi. Her eyes were rooted to the letter; triumph, gratitude, joy, illumined her face.

'It was not murder,' she cried; 'there was no treachery, no secrecy; they stood face to face—sinners both—blinded, maddened by passion. It was no murder. Father, how could I have wronged you by such base thoughts—I, who have known and loved you all these years! Guilty! yes, I will acknowledge your guilt; but not a treacherous assassin. My God, I thank Thee!'

In days when the first gentlemen of the land asserted their sense of honour and superiority to the common herd by slaying one another in a formal manner the idea of a duel was not so revolting as it is now. Even to Naomi, educated as she had been in a far different creed from the code of honour, the knowledge that her father had stood face to face with his foe, risking his own life against the life he took, was an infinite relief. In horrible night-

mare dreams she had seen him, with the assassin's face, creeping stealthily towards his victim. The horrid image had haunted her sleeping and waking; and now that horror was laid at rest for ever. Her belief in this confession of her father's was as implicit as her faith in God.

'Arnold,' she pleaded, with deep humility, as one who asked an almost impossible boon, 'can you ever bring yourself to forgive my erring father?'

'No!' he answered stoutly; 'but I no longer look upon him with loathing. There is one atonement left to him—he can stand face to face with me, as he stood with my brother, and let God judge between us.'

Naomi flung herself at his feet, clasping his hands, as if he held the keys of life and death.

'No, no, no!' she cried; 'you would not be so cruel, so wicked—you, who condemn the shedder of blood!'

'I want the life of the man who slew my brother. So much the better if I can have it in an honourable manner. Yes, Naomi, we will meet as men of honour should, and let the righteous cause win.'

'Arnold,' she cried, 'I thought you loved me.'

The pathos of that cry moved him. He bent over her as she knelt at his feet, resisting his effort to raise her, clinging to his knees in her agony, pleading as only women can plead for the life of their dearest.

'If I thought you loved me, and would give me love for love,' he said, with a sudden change to passionate tenderness, 'I would spare his life; yes, let him go unpunished to the grave; yes, forget that I ever had an only and beloved brother. It is a mean offer, a miserable bargain, proving me selfish, dastardly; but I am human, and I love you. My love, my only love! answer me.'

'Can you forgive me for being my father's daughter?'

'When I believed the worst of him I loved you, and held you unsullied by his guilt.'

'You must forgive him, Arnold. You would forgive him if you knew as much as I do. He was not in his right senses that awful day. I saw him go through the wood. Yes, I was there watching for him, fearing evil. His face has haunted me ever since. It was the face of a madman. It was my sin that caused all. Yes, Arnold, mine. You do not know how vile I am. I gave my father the letter your brother wrote to my stepmother—a lover's letter, full of despairing love. *That* maddened him, as it had maddened me. He was not in his right mind that day. He has never been the same man since—gloomy, austere, set against

those he had loved before. You cannot conceive how great a change there has been in him. We who have lived with him know and feel it. On my knees here, before God, I do not believe that my father was responsible for his acts that day.'

Arnold raised her from her knees, and put her in the arm-chair by the open window. She was almost fainting, but the brave spirit struggled with bodily weakness.

Arnold paced the room for a little while, deep in thought.

'What am I to do, Naomi?' he asked at last. 'I love you—would lay down my life for you; but I owe a duty to my brother. That is a solemn charge. He loved me—was so good to me. I have his letter summoning me home, full of affection, overflowing with generosity. What am I to do, Naomi? Counsel me, if you can. You loved him?'

'Loved him? Yes; it was my love that made me mad with jealousy; it was my love that rose up against him and destroyed him. If you must have a life for his life, take mine. Yes, Arnold, take mine. I am most guilty. It was my jealousy that killed him.'

'Naomi, we are all most miserable. I can do nothing; I feel myself tied and bound. Either way there is wrong and misery. I love you, and am miserable in loving you. I have my brother's death to avenge, yet cannot bring myself to injure your father. O my love, my love! your sad accusing face has haunted me ever since that night when you turned and looked at me at the chapel-door. What can I do?'

'Forgive,' said Naomi solemnly; 'that is what the Gospel teaches us—to forgive our enemies, even the enemies who have injured those we love. We can never err in being merciful. "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seventy times seven." That must mean pardon for wrongs man thinks unpardonable.'

'You can teach me to believe anything, Naomi. I am like a child in your hands.'

'May God teach you to judge and act wisely! He will not inspire you with thoughts of vengeance.' He has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." My unhappy father has suffered for his sin, and will continue to suffer till death brings him peace; but I know in my heart that God will forgive him.'

'And if God can forgive, erring man should not be obstinately unforgiving. That is what you would say, Naomi. We have an illimitable faith in God's capacity to pardon, yet find it so hard, sinners as we are, to forgive a fellow-sinner. It is a dark problem.'

'Pray that you may understand God's will, Arnold. He will lead and uphold you.'

'No; earthly passion will sway me. It is my love for you urges me to forgive your father.'

'I would have you act from a higher light. I will leave you to seek a better guidance,' Naomi answered, with gentle reproachfulness.

She felt that her father was secure from any violence of Arnold's after this interview. She left him full of faith that the right guidance would come, that the vengeful spirit which had threatened Joshua with ruin and death would be calmed and appeased. She knew that Arnold loved her; and, though all thoughts of herself were vague and secondary at such a crisis of her father's fate, she was glad of Arnold's love, for her father's sake.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CARRYING PEACE AND PARDON.]

JOSHUA was far upon his road before Naomi had left the Grange. He had walked many miles in the dull gray of early morning, before the shadowy clouds had parted or the stars begun to pale in the saffron lights of sunrise. The energy that sustained him, the eager purpose that bore him on in that beginning of his journey, made him unconscious of time or distance. He had heard Cynthia calling; yes, his wife's cry, piteous and weak, as of one in distress, was still sounding in his ear as he hurried along the well-known road, which seemed just a little strange and dream-like in the dim gray dawn. He heard her calling him, and he was going to answer her cry.

'Dearest, I am coming to you,' he repeated inwardly. 'I, who drove you away with undeserved reproaches, am coming to pray for pardon; I, who was cruel, unjust, savage, and inhuman, only because I loved too blindly,—I am coming to ask for pity from the tender heart I wounded. Love, I was mad, and I have suffered for my madness—a long night of suffering. The morning has come, and peace and pardon. My eyes are opened; I see and understand.'

It was only when a sudden faintness made him stagger dizzily and stretch out his hands to save himself from falling, that he became aware of the hot sun beating down upon his head, and the fact that he had walked many miles.

He was nearly twenty miles from Combhaven. He had crossed the wild craggy hills, and come back mechanically to the

coach-road. He was at the top of a long hill, and saw the coach toiling slowly up the white dusty road. He felt all at once that his strength was gone—gone utterly, as if it had left him for ever—and thanked God for the coming of the coach. It seemed by a special providence that he had been brought across those wild hills back to the turnpike-road in time for the passing of the coach.

‘If I had missed it I should not have got to Penmoyle to-night; and my darling is waiting for me,’ he said to himself.

There was a vacant place on the seat behind the driver. Joshua hailed the coach, and scrambled into this place before the coachman had time to pull up his horses.

‘You shouldn’t ha’ done that, Mr. Haggard,’ remonstrated the man; ‘it’s dangerous.’

Joshua took no notice. The man’s voice sounded far off, as in a dream. The horses went downhill and uphill over the wild yet fertile country, by hills and woods that Joshua knew as well as he knew his Bible. They stopped to change horses in straggling little villages, where he had preached in his young days; and people who remembered those days came out of their houses, and stood looking up at the coach and talked to him. He answered their inquiries and acknowledged their civil speeches mechanically, dimly conscious of their identity. He had a curious feeling of superiority to all these people, as if the universe had been planned for him, and they were only accidents in it, like the great black flies buzzing round the heads of the patient blinkered coach-horses, to whom Providence had given no special mercy except mane and tail.

The time had been—and but a year or so ago—when he would have got down from the coach and peeped into those whitewashed cottages, and had his well-chosen word of greeting or counsel for each old acquaintance. To-day their faces looking up at him were blank and meaningless. The faces of the rabble round Stephen may have looked so to the saint and martyr in his death agony.

Joshua’s mind was going on before him. He fancied himself arriving at Penmoyle in the sunset. She would be standing at the gate perhaps, watching for him, as he had found her on that unforgotten afternoon two years ago. He would see the sweet face, with the western light shining on it, the soft eyes kindling with love and happiness at sight of him. He had almost forgotten that bitter day of parting, the day when he had driven her into banishment, with more cruelty than Abraham had shown to ill-

used Hagar; and it can hardly be said that the patriarch was a pattern to all future husbands in that transaction.

O, how sweet it was to dwell upon that picture of meeting and reconciliation! The burden on his conscience had been cast off since the agony of yesterday. It was verily as if he had laid down his load on the sinners' altar. He forgot all the silent pangs and tortures of the last year, and felt as if a new life of happiness were opening before him. He would carry the lamp of the Gospel into dark places, he would preach by the wayside, as in his youth; he would carry neither purse nor scrip, but wander from village to village and from town to town, in that benighted north country he had read about in the lives of Wesley and Whitefield; or, if it were possible, still farther away, among the absolute heathen of the South Seas.

This was his vision of a glorious future. And she would be with him—his companion, helpmeet, and comforter. It was such a career as this to which she had aspired. Her spiritual nature had been revolted by the trader's petty life—she had sighed to see her husband doing the work of an apostle.

Such thoughts as these were in his mind all through the day. They rose and fell in his brain, wave upon wave, as regularly as the waves of the Atlantic were rising and falling upon the long sandy shore beyond those brown Cornish hills. The day seemed very long to him, for his exaggerated activity of brain made minutes like unto hours. And yet he was ineffably happy. No fear of disappointment at the end of his journey clouded the radiance of his visions. He apprehended no further stroke from an angry fate. God had punished him with the undying worm called conscience, and had heard his prayers and forgiven him. He feared nothing.

It was afternoon when the coach rumbled into the stony street of Truro. Joshua had to be reminded of his fare respectfully by the coachman. He was on the point of hurrying off without paying it.

'Your mind's full of better things, I know, Mr. Haggard,' said the man; 'but I thought you'd like me to remind you.'

'Thank you, Norman,' said Joshua dreamily. 'Yes, my mind was much occupied; pleasantly, though, pleasantly, as one sure of God's bounteous mercy.'

He gave the man a crown for himself. It was half as much as the fare—an astounding donation.

'You may not be driving me again for some time to come,' said the minister kindly.

'Thank 'ee, sir. It isn't many behaves as handsomely, and it's

always a pride to drive such as you. But don't take it as a liberty if I give 'ee one bit of advice. Don't try to get up to the outside of a coach before the 'osses 'ave stopped. You're in the prime of life, sir, maybe; but you're a good many years too old to do that with safety.'

'Yes, yes, Norman; I shall bear it in mind,' said Joshua, walking away, without stopping at the comfortable inn for 'bite or sup,' as Norman remarked afterwards.

'The fact is, the minister is wearing of hisself out,' the coachman remarked to his cronies that night. 'He's got oddish ways with him, and a look as if he didn't half know what's going on round about him.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ODOUR OF ROSEMARY.

It happened as Joshua had calculated. The sun was setting as he entered quiet Penmoyle. The walk from Truro had tired him more than he had supposed possible. He could hardly drag himself along the last mile or so of the dusty road, between hedges where the dog-roses and honeysuckle climbed high above his head, and where the foxgloves were opening their purple bells. The salt sea-wind, sweeping over yonder swelling hills, seemed to have lost its refreshing power. He turned his eyes wearily towards the western point—the wild Land's End, with its rocks of many-hued granite, on which the sea-gulls and cormorants were perching in the rosy evening light. The scene was so familiar to him that he could see it all, in that clear vision of the mind, as he turned his gaze westward. Was there anything on this vast earth more beautiful, he wondered, than that wild point of English soil, with the great Atlantic waves for ever beating up against it—an impregnable natural fortress, the rocky seat of dead-and-gone giants, for ever defying the assaults of ocean?

His thoughts wandered a good deal during these last miles, when his body was racked with the pains of exceeding fatigue. He thought of Nicholas Wild, his old pupil, and the little chapel among yonder hills. The young man had written him long letters, telling him of the rich reward that had crowned his labours, and how he had built a school for the children of his flock. Joshua had been too preoccupied to take any notice of the letters, and the memory of that neglect smote him now as he came nearer his pupil's home.

'Poor Nicholas! he was always faithful and affectionate. We will go and see him, my wife and I,' Joshua said to himself.

At last the old square tower of Penmoyle church rose in its gray severity above the avenue of limes that led to it. Then came the well-known street; the chestnut-grove where the children played at even-tide; the inn; the village pump; the cocks and the hens, and a vagabond pig picking up unconsidered trifles in the middle of the road; the old yellow waggon turned up on end after a day's usefulness. The sun was still visible—a shining crimson disk on the edge of the western hill.

It was mere foolishness, no doubt, and Joshua chid himself for so weak a regret, but he felt strangely disappointed when he came in sight of the little green gate before Miss Webling's cottage, and did not see the graceful figure of his wife standing there, just as he had seen her that happy afternoon two years ago, when he had come to Penmoyle full of benevolent intentions, and ignorant of his heart's mystery. He had counted on seeing her there. It would have been the natural fulfilment of his dream, it seemed to him, that she should be on the watch for his coming. She had called him; and, by some mystic power beyond the limits of flesh and blood, he had heard her summons. Why was she not watching for him, full of faith in his obedience? Was his sympathy with her stronger than hers with him?

He passed the chestnut-grove. It seemed to him that the children were less noisy than of old. They were under the spreading branches, the same boys and girls—the fustian jackets and lavender pinafores, the petticoated little ones, with chubby cheeks and great staring brown eyes. But there was a hush upon the scene. The elder children were congregated in little knots talking. Some of them suddenly perceived him, and there was a curious excitement among them immediately, and much whispering, and some pointing at him with eager fingers; and he could see that they all stopped their talk to watch him.

Joshua walked slowly towards the green gate, strangely disappointed and depressed. The windows of the Webling cottage faced south-west, and it was only natural that the spotless blinds should be drawn to exclude such a blaze of sunset; but it gave the house a blank look none the less. The casements offered him no smile of welcome.

Here was a friendly welcome, however, from an unexpected direction. Before Joshua had opened the gate, Mr. Martin, the kind old minister, came hurrying across from his dwelling on the other side of the road, and clasped him by both hands, and looked at him with eyes brimming over with tears.

'God bless you! God sustain and comfort you, my beloved friend!' he cried. 'I was watching for you. Oh, be composed, my

friend, be composed! Such a blessed euthanasia! The precious soul of my Elizabeth was not more spotless or fitter for heaven. Dear friend, let us go in together.'

Joshua turned and looked at him with wild wondering eyes; then wrenched himself suddenly from the old man's friendly grasp, and moved towards the door.

'No, no,' he muttered; 'I don't want you. I am going alone—to see my wife. Cynthia!' he called, as he opened the door. 'Cynthia!' in a louder and more urgent tone—'Cynthia, where are you?'

A fiery impatience had taken hold of him. He could not wait for formalities of any kind. The Miss Weblings would come, and there would be stately greetings, and cake and wine brought out of the wainscot cupboard, and all manner of ceremonies before he could open his arms and clasp his ill-used wife to his heart, and weep over her and be forgiven.

Deborah came out of the kitchen, and took his hands, just as old Mr. Martin had done, and looked at him in the same tearful way.

Were the people all mad here, or was he? Even the children had seemed to look at him strangely.

'Dearest friend,' said Deborah, 'this is a sore trial for all of us. Priscilla has been in hysterics all day; out of one fit into another. Quite dreadful! The feathers we've burnt, and the vinegar, and all to no purpose. She has such a feeling heart.'

It was Priscilla who was ill, then. That's what all the fuss meant.

'I want to see my wife,' Joshua said shortly.

'At once?' faltered Deborah, looking at him timorously.

'Yes, at once; this instant. Have I not come all these weary miles to see her? This instant.'

'O dear sir, what need of impatience? Be calm, I beg you.'

The doors of both parlours were open. Joshua had glanced in and seen that both rooms were empty.

'Where is she?' he asked. 'Upstairs?'

'Yes, in our spare room,' Deborah answered huskily. 'Let me show you the way.'

'I know it,' he said; and went upstairs before her.

The narrow corkscrew staircase was close and dark, like the winding stair in a church-tower. Midway Joshua started as if he had been shot, and came to a standstill.

There was a pungent odour of freshly-gathered herbs, a perfume he had not smelt thus, on the threshold of a bed-chamber, since his mother's death.

'My God!' he cried. 'Is it rosemary?'

'Yes,' sobbed Deborah; 'we always use it here. We've a bush in the garden on purpose. The neighbours come and beg a bunch of it when they've a death in the house.'

Joshua staggered up the few steep stairs, lifted the jingling latch of the low wainscot door, and went into the room in which he had slept two years ago, when the new joys and pains of love began to grow in his heart.

That odour of rosemary had forewarned him what he was to see: no living wife, standing on the threshold to greet him, with warm arms ready to be wound about his neck—no sweet eyes lifted shyly to meet his own—no faltering words, or half-broken sobs: only a fair marble statue lying on a white flower-strewn bed, hands meekly folded, violet-veined eyelids closed over wearied eyes—a broken heart for ever at rest.

He stood looking at her for a long time, as it seemed to the heart-stricken Deborah—looking at her with eyes that hung upon that silent beauty in a rapture of despair; then flung up his arms with a sudden gurgling cry, and fell upon the floor beside her bed like a stone.

He remained unconscious for many hours, breathing stertorously, and lying like a log upon the bed where his faithful attendants had laid him. The village doctor had bled him, and administered various orthodox remedies of a severe character, with but little result. Mr. Martin, the good old Dissenting minister, stayed with him all through the weary night, which might know no dawn in this world. The spinster sisters were indefatigable, Priscilla waiving her peculiar prerogative of hysterics in her desire to be useful.

The sun had risen, and the birds were singing outside the open casements, when Joshua slowly lifted his heavy lids and looked about him with dim bloodshot eyes.

For some minutes after he had struggled back to consciousness there was a dimness in his brain as well as in his eyes, and he looked at the anxious watchful faces vaguely. Then memory came back with cruel distinctness.

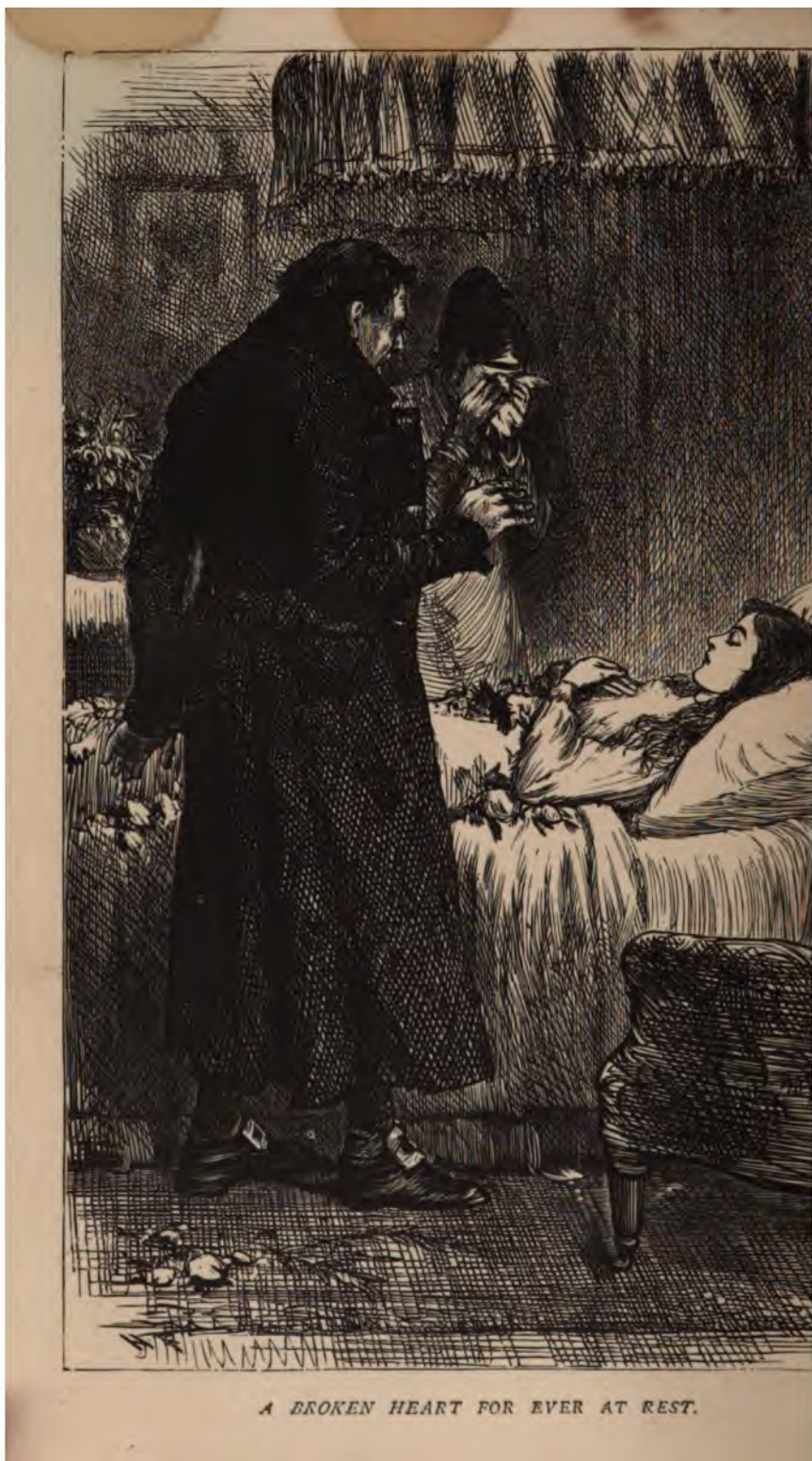
'Tell me—everything,' he said.

'Dear friend,' pleaded Mr. Martin, 'let your mind be at rest for a little while. Repose, dear sir; you have been heavily afflicted, and you have had a stroke of illness which might have been fatal, had God refused to hear our earnest prayers.'

'Tell me about my wife,' urged Joshua vehemently.

'She is at rest. She has gone to her heavenly home. I, who

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A BROKEN HEART FOR EVER AT REST.

was with her at the last, have no doubt of her calling and election. She was one of God's chosen vessels, with a mind naturally attuned to heavenly things, like that pure spirit, my heavenly-minded Elizabeth, whose deathbed conversations it was my precious privilege to preserve for the edification of many. Yes, she came very near that sainted young woman in the holy simplicity of her nature.'

'What was it that killed her?' asked Joshua, putting aside all these words with a motion of his strong hand. 'Did she die of a broken heart? Was it my ill-usage that caused her death?'

'Your ill-usage, dear friend! Your senses must be wandering. She always talked of you as the best and most honoured of husbands. Ill-usage, and from you! 'She loved you above all earthly things. Your name was on her lips with her last breath.'

'Yes,' cried Joshua, 'she called me, and I heard her. Give me my watch,' pointing to the chest of drawers where it lay; 'see, I stopped the hands at the moment in which I heard her voice calling to me in a kind of dream—not a common dream, mark you—twice as vivid and lifelike. It was after midnight on Sunday; see, twenty minutes past one.'

'“This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes!”' exclaimed Mr. Martin piously. 'It was at that very hour her spirit took flight.'

'Why was I not told that she was ill—dying?' asked Joshua.

'It was her wish that you should not be troubled. “He will send for me or come for me when he wants me to go home again,” she said. “He has higher things than me to think about.” She was so earnest in this wish that we did not like to overrule her.'

'And nobody thought that she was dangerously ill,' explained Deborah. 'The doctor couldn't make her out. That was what he always said. It was one of the strangest cases he'd ever had to deal with. Some days she seemed so well and bright; and she was always industrious, anxious to be doing something for us; household work or needlework, it was all the same—we couldn't give her enough to do.'

'The journey here hurt her a great deal, I think,' said Priscilla, 'though she would never own to it. She walked a good bit of the way, I believe, and she was footsore and very weak when she came. I opened the door to her at dusk one evening, and I almost thought she was a ghost. “I want to be your servant, dear Miss Priscilla,” she said, “as I was in the old happy days.” “Why, Mrs. Haggard,” said I, “what would your honoured husband think of such a notion?” But I'd hardly got out the words before she fell down in a faint at

my feet ; and for a week after that we had her laid up, and as low as could be.'

'And you never wrote to me about her!' cried Joshua, with agonised reproach.

'Well, the truth was, we didn't like. We thought there was something wrong—a family quarrel perhaps, second marriages often turn out so—and the poor thing seemed to have come to us for refuge, and clung to us so ; and if ever we talked of writing to you, she seemed so distressed. And we had always been fond of her, and had missed her dreadfully after her marriage. She was like a daughter to us now she had come back ; and I'm sure we nursed her and took care of her in her illness as if she'd really been a daughter, as I know Mr. Martin will bear witness.'

'You did,' said the minister ; 'she could not have had better nursing or kinder treatment.'

'It was only just at the last that there was any mention of danger,' continued Deborah. 'On Saturday morning the doctor found her very low, poor dear, and her mind was wandering a little. He seemed quite distressed as he came downstairs with me, as if it were a shock to him to find her so. "I don't at all like her looks this morning, Miss Webling," he said ; "I begin to be afraid we shall lose her." I never had such a turn in my life. Poor Priscilla and I were almost beside ourselves with grief, and it was as much as I could do to write you a letter, begging you to come at once. You don't seem to have received that letter.'

'No, it must have been delivered after I left home. The post is so slow ; you should have sent a messenger. Tell me, for God's sake—did she die happy, and did she love me at the last?'

'At the last, and always,' answered Mr. Martin earnestly. 'She bared her heart to me. I knew all its secrets, its waverings from the right, its weakness. She had always loved and revered you. She had been tempted, poor child, and her fancy had strayed to another for a little while—only a little while. Heart and mind were true to her duty. She was worthy of your fondest love ; she was worthy of your deepest regret.'

'And I cast her from me, I repudiated her, I spurned her as the vilest of sinners ! O friend, can her injured spirit look down upon me from heaven, and pity ? Can God ever pardon my sin ? He gave me this sweet flower to wear in my bosom, and I cast it from me, and trampled it under my foot. I have steeped my soul in sin, I have dyed my hands with blood !'

The two spinsters and the minister looked at each other with an awful significance. These remorseful utterances seemed to

them the tokens of a wandering mind. That this man, their model and pattern of uprightness, could deeply err, came hardly within the limits of belief.

CHAPTER XL.

'BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.'

THE days wore on very slowly for Naomi in her father's absence. Her heart was weighed down with anxiety on his account; but he had told her not to follow him, and, anxious though she was, she obeyed implicitly. A great burden had been taken from her mind by Joshua's confession. Bitter as it was to know that her lover had fallen by her father's hand, that the bright young life had been snapped short off, like a blossom from its stalk, in a burst of sinful passion, yet there was all the difference in the world between a fair fight and a dastardly assassination; and she was able now to think of her father as of other duellists she had heard and read about—red-handed sinners all, but not beyond the reach of human pity.

She was reconciled even to the idea of her father's prolonged absence, of a separation which might extend over years. It would be better, happier for him to go out into untrodden fields, and do difficult work for his Master's sake. This pious labour would be his penance: in heathen lands he would find cities of atonement, from whose gates he might come forth loosened from the burden and stigma of his crime. She had herself longed to go into strange lands and teach heathen people the Gospel. What more natural than that her father, with his consciousness of a terrible sin to be expiated, should desire to brave dangers and endure hardships and trials in the great cause?

'Let him come back to me ten years hence, old and bent and gray,' said Naomi, 'and I will praise God for His bounteous mercies. I will say that our lives have been full of blessings, even after all our sorrows.'

This was her prayer—that he might go forth as a messenger of the Gospel, and do his work of expiation, and come back to her purified and happy. It was the old heroic Greek idea of atonement, only in a Christian and better form.

A letter had come from Penmoyle for Joshua, and was laid aside, unopened, awaiting tidings from him. No one supposed that the letter was of any particular importance. What they all waited for anxiously was a letter from Joshua himself.

It was Thursday, and Oswald Pentreath had been lying in the family vault for many days and nights. It seemed a natural

thing already to think of him resting there with his ancestors, and it was almost possible to forget that he had lain for nearly a year in the darkness of the deserted mine, none knowing his fate. Strange how soon poor human nature resigns itself to the inevitable! Arnold bore the annihilation of all his hopes about his brother better than he could have supposed it possible to bear so heavy a blow. That agonising grief which he had felt when he supposed Oswald the victim of a treacherous assassin was lessened by Joshua's confession. At least he had fallen face to face with death. The murderer had not crept behind him with uplifted knife, coming upon his victim in a ghostly silence. It had been a hard fate and a cruel one, but not so bad as this. And poor Naomi, the innocent sufferer from her lover's inconstancy and her father's sin—could he ever be sorry enough for her? could he ever be sufficiently kind, or gentle, or thoughtful for her dear sake? Consideration for her pleaded eloquently against his desire for revenge. Joshua must go unscathed, so far as human vengeance went, and take his punishment from God. This was the result of many a weary hour of thought that followed upon Arnold's interview with Naomi.

Thursday morning brought another letter from Penmoyle, in the same handwriting as the last, but directed to Judith instead of to Joshua.

Miss Haggard broke the seal with a slight tremor, while Naomi waited full of anxiety. Why had her father not written?

Chestnut Cottage, Penmoyle,
Cornwall, June 26th.

Dear Miss Haggard,—I hope you will pardon the above familiarity, but, although we have not had the pleasure of meeting, you can be no stranger to one who loves and reveres your brother as I do.

I deeply regret to inform you that Mr. Haggard now lies in a sadly precarious state. Indeed our doctor and another gentleman, summoned at his advice from Penzance, entertain little hope of his recovery. The shock caused by his wife's death, which took place prior to his arrival, caused an apoplectic stroke. He recovered consciousness after several hours, but has never been quite right in his mind since the seizure.

Feeling assured that you and the rest of his family would desire to be with him at such a time, I hasten to communicate the sad state of affairs, and beg you to make whatever use you please of our small abode. It is entirely at your disposal, and my elder sister and self will consider it a privilege to do all in our power to ameliorate your sorrow by such attentions as sympathetic hearts can offer. Our poor Cynthia's funeral takes place to-day. It is perhaps a blessing that in your suffering brother's state of mind he is scarcely conscious of passing events.

Awaiting your speedy arrival, I remain, dear Miss Haggard, your obedient servant,

PRISCILLA WEBLING.

Before she had read half this letter, Judith Haggard gave a shriek of horrified surprise, and her niece looked over her shoulder and read it with her. The two women stood side by side, devouring the lines with white agonised faces, each in her own way feeling that this sorrow was the deathblow to all hope. James was in the shop, busy, happy, ignorant of this evil. He was whistling the last popular melody, as he went about his work. How awful it seemed to hear him!

Naomi's grief found no outlet in tears or sobs or passionate speech. She stood with the letter in her hand, her lips trembling.

'The coach, aunt, the coach!' she gasped. 'Is it too late?'

'Gone half an hour, child; we must have a post-shay. Jim!'

The shrill voice rang through house and shop, and Jim appeared with a scared face at the parlour-door.

'What's the matter, aunt?'

'Your father's dying, and we're going to him. Get us a post-shay.'

Jim looked from one to the other in awful wonder. Naomi tried to speak, but, failing, gave him Priscilla's letter.

'What!' he cried, hurriedly reading, 'the poor little stepmother dead and buried! Has the world come to an end?'

'You unfeeling boy!' exclaimed Judith. 'To think of anybody else when your father's in such a state!'

'Father will come round again, please God; but poor little Cynthia—buried yesterday—so young and pretty! Isn't it dreadful?'

'Go for a chaise, Jim, for pity's sake,' cried Naomi. 'Father may die while you stand wondering there. Oh, let me go to him, let me go! let me keep him back from death!'

James ran across to the First and Last, the only place in Combhaven where post-horses were to be had. There was a burst of sympathy from the stout landlord when he heard Jim's news. The chaise should be ready in ten minutes—the best horses in his stable.

It was half an hour before the chaise was at the door, despite the landlord's promises. Naomi and her aunt had put on their bonnets and packed a few necessaries in a carpet-bag, and had been waiting in the parlour ever so long, as it seemed to them, before an ancient yellow-bodied chariot, like that which had brought Joshua's young bride to Combhaven, pulled up before the garden-gate.

'You'll stay at home and mind the business till I can come back, Jim,' said Judith.

'I'd rather go to poor father; but perhaps it's best so,' answered

Jim. 'But if he should be very bad, if there's no chance of his getting over it, you'll send for me, aunt? I should like to see him before——'

A sob strangled the young man's speech, and he went back to the house, leaving them to get into the carriage unassisted. Some one was at Naomi's side before she could mount the steps. It was Captain Pentreath, breathless with running.

'Naomi, I have just heard of your sorrow,' he said gently. 'One of our men told me as I came across the meadow. Dear sister, let me go with you. Let me go with you, Miss Haggard,' he added pleadingly to Judith. 'I should like to go—to be of service to you, if I can—to ask your brother's pardon for my violence the other night.'

'You'd need be sorry for that, I think,' answered Judith. 'What's the good of your coming? He'll want to see his blood-relations, poor dear—that's natural; but it can't give him much pleasure to see you.'

'I may be of use to you on the journey. Let me come, Miss Haggard. Two unprotected women, anxious, agitated as you are, ought not to undertake such a journey. These post-boys are such ruffians. I shall be able to prevent loss of time, to ensure you civil treatment.'

Judith relented a little. Post-boys were an exacting and difficult race—greedy of gain, capable of abandoning their helpless fare upon a lonesome highway, or of colleaguings with highwaymen for a defenceless traveller's spoliation. Perhaps Judith, though strong-minded enough at home, where every one trembled at her voice, felt that she should be a weak vessel abroad. She had never travelled farther than Barnstaple in her life; and to go up alone into the wilds of bleak and barren Cornwall—the very stronghold of witchcraft—a place where half the people were savage miners, and the other half wreckers and smugglers; and to be benighted, perhaps, on a moor where the Druids sacrificed human beings before the days of King Arthur!

These terrors were too much for Judith. The proffered escort of a courageous young man, open-handed and ready to make use of his purse for the gratification of post-boys, was not to be despised. He had brought a false charge against Joshua in an hour of temporary madness; but he had repented, and this act of to-day was a confession of his past folly. All Combhaven would know of it, and see how baseless he now felt his idea of Joshua's guilt to have been. Judith gave way, but maintained her dignity even in the moment of concession.

'It matters very little to me whether you come or stay,' she

said. 'My mind's too full of my poor brother to care about anything else. But Naomi may be glad of your company on the dark roads—girls are so timid.'

'Indeed, aunt, I am not frightened!' exclaimed Naomi.

'I am coming with you,' said Arnold decisively.

There was a seat at the back of the vehicle, a kind of rumble; and into this he mounted, after despatching a small boy to the Grange with a message for Nicholas the butler, who was to send his master's valise on to Truro by the evening coach. Arnold would not ask so much as five minutes' delay, lest Judith should change her mind and decline his company. So the post-boy smacked his whip, and the chaise went rattling through the long village street, to the delight of the inhabitants, who flocked out of their dwellings to witness the unwonted spectacle.

A long journey at any time; a weary one for aching hearts. Naomi looked out of the carriage-window with dull eyes that roamed over hill and valley, wood and winding stream, and saw no comfort anywhere. Was the journey never to be over? she wondered, as the slow hours rolled on; was there never to be an end of those green hedgerows, and tangled honeysuckles, and clambering dog-roses, and dusty, wayside ferns, and sudden hollows, and jutting walls of hill?—these perpetual hills, at the foot of which the travellers descended, to walk in mournful silence to the top, where all the glory of the valley below could not move Naomi's cold lips to a smile of gladness.

Arnold made no attempt at consolation. He entreated his companions to hope for the best, and after that made no further allusion to their grief. He talked to them very little, only showing himself anxious for their comfort and repose. He saved them all trouble about post-boys, or any of the details of their journey. They had nothing to do but be patient, and wait till darkness came, and the end.

Even to eyes accustomed to the rustic seclusion of Comhaven, Penmoyle looked a curious out-of-the-world place as the post-chaise drove into the wide village street after sunset on that June evening. Lights twinkled feebly in two or three casements, wide apart and rare, as if the majority had gone to roost at curfew. There was one light much brighter than the rest, which seemed to Naomi to shine like a star. Some instinct of her heart told her that it was the candle in her father's sick-room.

'There,' she cried, putting her head out of the window, and calling to the post-boy; 'stop there.'

But Arnold had made his inquiries at the beginning of the village, and the boy was already pulling up his horses. That lighted

casement belonged to Chestnut Cottage. The approach of the carriage had been heard within, and Deborah's corkscrew curls were waving at the door, as she came out to receive her guests.

'O dear Miss Haggard; O dear Miss Naomi,' she gasped; 'thank God you are come!'

'Not too late!' cried Naomi, going into the house; 'not too late!'

'No, dear young lady, praised be Heaven! He has asked for you so often.'

'Take me to him, please—at once.'

'But you ought to be prepared for the change——'

'God will give me strength to bear all things when his dear head is on my breast. Father, I am coming,' she cried, as if her voice would carry strength and new life to the sick man.

She went upstairs as quickly as if she had known the corkscrew staircase all her life. The door of her father's room was open; the window opened wide to the summer night. The old-fashioned tent bedstead, with its dimity festooning and netted fringe, faced the door.

Who was it lying there, still as a stone figure, with a white strange face, and dark cavernous eyes—a face Naomi had never seen before? For a moment her heart failed, and she shrank away a step or two, as from something more awful than death. Was this her father?

Yes; the hollow eyes lighted up at sight of her, the livid lips moved tremulously, and then murmured, 'Naomi!'

In the next instant she was on her knees beside his bed, clasping the heavy hands, crying over him, kissing him with those passionate despairing kisses life gives to death.

'Dearest, I have come to nurse you, to bring you back to life. God will help me. I have been praying for you all through our long journey. Father, you will get well for my sake.'

I am dying, Naomi. The doctor and my old friend Martin have both told me so. Do not cry, dear; I am suffering so little. The passage is made very easy for me. And I have an infinite, inextinguishable faith in my Redeemer's love. I go to Him without fear. He has loosed me from the burden of my sin. Yes, Naomi, it is no idle boast. I feel and know that I am forgiven. My punishment has been awarded here. My broken heart has reconciled me with my God.'

'You shall not die!' said Naomi. 'God cannot be so cruel as to part us now, when there is no cloud between us any more, when I can love you and honour you as I did in my childhood. Father, you will live for my sake.'

'No, dear, I have done with earthly life. God sent His stroke in mercy when I came into this house and found my darling dead. O Naomi, my latter days have been full of sin. I have been the slave of passion. And yet I might have been so happy. I can see her still—sitting in the sunshine—hair like spun gold—so helpless and lovely, so ignorant of good and evil—like Eve when God gave her to Adam.'

His mind wandered a little after this. All through the night he lay in the same attitude, a corpse-like figure, a soul hovering between life and death. Naomi never stirred from her seat beside his pillow, save to kneel and pray. Judith and Priscilla sat a little way aloof, watching the two, only coming nearer at intervals to moisten the sick man's lips with a feather dipped in brandy.

About an hour after daybreak Arnold, who had spent the night in the parlour below, came slowly up the stair, and stood on the threshold. Joshua had been lying for a long time with his eyes closed, breathing heavily, and his watchers had supposed him sleeping; but at the sound of Arnold's cautious footfall he opened his eyes, and those restless hands of his fastened with a nervous grasp upon the coverlet.

'Is that Captain Pentreath?' he asked his daughter.

'Yes, dear father.'

'Let the others go away,' looking dimly round at the two women; 'I want to be alone with you and him.'

Priscilla and Judith left the room, full of wonder.

'You got my letter?' he said.

'Yes, Mr. Haggard; and I am here to ask your forgiveness for the accusation I brought against you. When I found my poor brother in his secret grave I believed him the victim of a murderer. I now believe that he was the victim of his own folly, and that he willingly staked his life against yours.'

Joshua was silent. Some kind of struggle—whether bodily or mental those who watched him could not tell—was racking him. His nether lip worked convulsively; the veins stood up darkly purple from the broad strong brow.

'My letter told the truth,' he said after that painful pause, 'but not all the truth. I am going to face an offended God—going to Him confident in His illimitable mercy. Naomi, do not hate me when I am dead'—his hands wandered helplessly for a little, and then he clasped them round her neck, and let his head fall on her shoulder—'do not hate me, dear. Your lover was murdered. He was generous, and I was a dastard. We stood up, face to face, each with a pistol in his hand. I was to count three, he told me, and then take aim. But as I lifted my hand to aim

at his heart I saw his arm flung up, his pistol pointed to the sky. It was but an instant, fleeter than a breath, before I fired straight at his breast. It was thirty years since I had pulled a trigger—not since I was an idle lad, and went rabbit-shooting with my father's old blunderbuss. Yet my aim was deadly. The bullet pierced his heart. He had fired in the air. I had just time enough to see and understand what he was doing before I killed him. This was the crime that weighed upon my soul and dragged me down to the pit. O God, I can see him now, with his face lifted up, the sun shining on it, his arm raised to fire in the air. It was but a flash, scarce time for thought, but when it was over I knew myself a murderer. O God, only an instant between everlasting glory and eternal condemnation, unless Thine infinite sacrifice can blot out mine iniquity.'

There was silence. Naomi's face was buried in the coverlet. Arnold walked across to the open window, and stood there looking out at the gray morning sky, deeply thoughtful.

'My God, my sin is heavy,' ejaculated Joshua, after an interval; 'Thou only knowest my temptation. I, who had preached against duelling, became a duellist; I, who had taught men brotherly love, stained my hands with my brother's blood. Only in illimitable mercy can I find hope; and who shall tell the sinner his case is hopeless when God has given the promise of forgiveness?'

He lay for a long time after this in a state that was almost unconsciousness. The doctor came and felt his pulse, and told them that he was slowly sinking. It was only the vigour of his constitution which had held out so long against death. The nobly-built frame had wrestled involuntarily with man's last enemy, while the spirit yearned to pass the mystic river, and rest in the fair land beyond.

That day wore on, and the night which followed it, and another long summer day, which seemed to Naomi different even in the colour of its sky from every other day in her life. The sunshine climbed the whitewashed wall, and touched with brighter gold the tarnished gilding of the old oval picture-frames, and glorified the old cups and saucers and quaint little pottery jars on the narrow chimney-piece; and still Joshua lay, awfully motionless, with his dull eyes turned to the light.

It was sunset when the dreaded change came. They were all on their knees praying silently when Joshua lifted himself up in the bed, and stretched out his arms towards that fading glory in the western sky.

'Cynthia—chosen—beloved,' he cried; 'innocent as a little child—ignorant of evil! Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

And so, with a long-drawn shivering sigh, he fell back upon the pillow; and, as the sun went down behind a dark range of moorland, this little lamp of light went out with it, no less secure of resurrection.

EPILOGUE.

JOSHUA HAGGARD has been lying in his quiet grave among the Cornish hills just three years. It is midsummer time again, and the long straggling village of Combhaven is looking its gayest, beautified by Nature, and not by Art. There is an unaccustomed life and stir in the place—people dressed in their best clothes, new bonnet-ribbons as rife as butterflies, every one upon the tiptoe of expectancy—and Naomi Haggard standing by the open parlour-window, very pale, in a gray Quaker-like silk—almost as pretty a gown as that wedding-dress she gave away four years ago; but it was not her father's hand this time which tested the quality of the silk, or her father's blessing which made the gift sweet.

Naomi has been an independent young woman for the last three years; for Joshua Haggard's will, made immediately after Oswald's dismissal, left his only daughter the five thousand pounds which had been intended as her marriage portion. She has suffered her aunt's domestic tyranny none the less meekly because of this independence. She has lived her quiet life in the old familiar home, so desolate without her father, and has taught her classes in the Sunday-school, and helped the new minister by many a quiet service, and held her place in the hearts of the Dissenters of Combhaven, who still honour Joshua's memory as that of a great and good man. This is Naomi's consolation. No dishonour has ever been attached to her father's name. The secret of Oswald's fate is known to none living save Arnold and herself.

To-day is a great day for Naomi—the happiest she has known since her father's death; for the memorial chapel—the new Bethel which she has built with a portion of her inheritance—is to be opened to-day: a fair lofty building of gray stone—a little too much like a corn-exchange on a small scale for the improved taste of this latter part of the century, but in those days a temple of exceeding beauty. There are four long straight windows on each side, an oak pulpit and reading-desk, a commodious gallery, and a Doric portico; and in the eyes of Combhaven the edifice is second only to Exeter Cathedral and Barnstaple Market.

To Naomi's mind the fairest thing in the brand-new chapel is a brazen tablet in front of the gallery bearing this brief inscription: 'This Chapel was erected in affectionate remembrance of Joshua Haggard, Minister.'

Naomi leaves the chapel, after the opening service, leaning on Arnold Pentreath's arm, tearful, but not altogether unhappy. Friends gather round her and congratulate her, and are warm in their praises of the new Bethel; but it is to be noticed that there is an unwonted reverence in the tone of these old acquaintances, and that Mrs. Spradgers, notorious for extravagance in millinery, drops a low courtesy to Miss Haggard, instead of extending her pudgy hand in its black-lace glove.

Standing on the threshold of the new chapel, Naomi stands also on the threshold of a new life. Her lover—faithful and unchanging through his three years' apprenticeship—is by her side, and to-morrow is to be their wedding-day.

The End.

My Three.

Love and Joy and she,
What a laughing three,
Ever home with me
In my happy heart;

Making all my days
Sweet as odorous Mays,
With their chat and ways
Where I take a part.

Oh, their fun is rare!
How they rout out care!
Not a sigh may dare
In my thoughts to hide!

All the world's dull fuss
They fright far from us;
All life's ills are thus
Hid, whate'er betide.

Saucy three are they,
Making every day
Just a life of play;
Business plagues them not.

Loving's their employ,
Laughing and all joy,
Mocking at annoy,
When it's not forgot.

Let me thank the Fates
These such pleasant mates
Hush all strife that grates
Ever on life's bliss;

If a grief appear,
If an ill come near,
Presto! never fear!
Drown it in a kiss!

Oh, you saucy three,
Evermore with me
House. I'm safe; where she
Homes, the other two

Can but fondly dwell;
Ah! need Love to tell,
I must hold her well!
That's what I must do.

W. C. BENNETT.

The New Republic;

OR, CULTURE, FAITH, AND PHILOSOPHY IN AN ENGLISH
COUNTRY HOUSE.

BOOK IV.—CHAPTER I.

MR. HERBERT was much pre-occupied at dinner with the subject of the afternoon's conversation, but it was long before the company as a whole seemed likely to recur to it: and when he was suddenly made conscious of the flight of time by finding he had something sweet in his mouth, he was not much comforted by the scraps of talk that floated into his ears. First he heard Lady Ambrose and Mr. Luke on the opposite side of the table; and then Dr. Jenkinson and Mrs. Sinclair on his own.

'Mrs. Laleham!' Lady Ambrose was saying; 'why, that little woman has the nastiest tongue in all London. Of course you heard of the great scene in Chesham Place the other day, and how she told the old Duchess of Dundee to her face that she was cheating at cards.'

'Yes,' Dr. Jenkinson was saying to Mrs. Sinclair, 'Lady Ambrose is a *very* old acquaintance of mine. I *very* often meet her in London. A charming woman—a charming woman! Perhaps she knows a little too much of the world.'

'H'm!' Mrs. Sinclair answered in a somewhat dissentient voice; 'she's a sort of woman whose acquaintances are all very distinguished people—' Dr. Jenkinson looked much pleased—'her friends—well, I believe they're nothing very particular. It's a capital thing for her friends, you see,' Mrs. Sinclair added, 'for she never talks about them behind their backs.'

But as she said this, a general hush began. In a few moments Laurence's voice was the only one audible. Then that ceased; and then there was a general pause.

Mr. Herbert took advantage of the time.

'Well!' he exclaimed, 'and when are we to have some more of the discussion that was cut short by the dressing-bell? For there were many things left that you were going to tell me, and that I much wanted to hear.'

Everyone seemed listening, and Mr. Herbert went on.

'You had all agreed, this afternoon,' he said, 'and in an entirely clear and beautiful way, that a really noble society, such as you wish to make a picture of, must be possessed of, and guided by, the

completest culture, or education, or taste—for these words mean one and the same thing—and that true taste implies, before all things, a true discrimination between right and wrong. Now, then, you come to the practical part of the matter. You, with all this taste and culture—what sort of life does it lead you to reach out towards? What would you, men and women of the nineteenth century, make of life, could you mould it to your own wishes? How would you make existence a satisfying thing to yourselves? In what would you place your happiness? What would be your noblest purposes, your most cherished emotions, your most admired types of character? These are the questions that I am anxious to hear answered; and just this very moment, I think I heard Mr. Laurence beginning in part to answer them.'

'Yes, I certainly was talking,' said Laurence, 'of the hints of a better state of things than our disordered present seems to suggest to us. I was saying that, however limited might be the class that shared it, there seemed to have been born into the world during the present century a set of more delicate emotions and sentiments, not only on a few subjects, but on nearly all, that were tending to give life a new complexion, and were filling us with quite new dreams of what might be.'

'Perfectly true,' said Mr. Luke, 'perfectly true!'

'You take a rather more rose-coloured view of things than you did last night,' said Mr. Storks.

'No,' said Mr. Luke, with a sigh, 'far from it. I am not denying that the majority of us are at present either Barbarians or Philistines; and the ugliness of these is more glaring now than at any former time. But that any of us are able to see them thus distinctly in their true colours, itself shows that there must be a deal of light somewhere. Even to make darkness visible some light is needed. We should always recollect that. We are only discontented with ourselves when we are struggling to be better than ourselves. This, indeed, is the very thing, I imagine, that Mr. Laurence means.'

'Well,' said Mr. Herbert, 'and in what particular ways are our emotions and sentiments grown more delicate? If we can only answer that definitely, a great deal is settled.'

'The most obvious instance,' said Laurence, 'of what I mean is, I think, the modern feeling for external nature, and the strange way in which all its aspects seem to mix themselves with our life and longings. But nearly all our other feelings, it seems to me, have changed just like this one, and have become more sensitive, and more highly organised. If we may judge by its expression in

literature, love has certainly; and that I suppose is the most important and comprehensive feeling in life.'

'Does Mr. Laurence only *suppose* that?' sighed Mrs. Sinclair, casting down her eyes.

'Indeed, I think that human life as a whole, with all its relations, its wants, its possibilities, has come to be looked upon by the choicer minds of the world in a more tender and discriminating way. The beauty of youth, with all its buoyancy and innocence, wakes in us of the modern world a more wistful and solemn regret; we are more keenly alive to the pathos of failure; to the sadness of the cold shadows that will often darken the whole inward landscape, and the ravage made by the storms that will sometimes break over it; and to the gleams of sunshine fitfully reappearing, often only touching the distant hills. Yes, all this sensitiveness is, I think, distinctly modern. To find some rational purpose in life was once merely enjoined as a supernatural duty. In our times it has taken our common nature upon it, and become a natural longing.'

'Yes,' suddenly exclaimed Lady Grace, who had been listening intently to her nephew's words; 'and if you are speaking of modern progress, Otho, you should not leave out the diffusion of those noble ideas of justice, and right, and freedom, and humanity which are at work in the great heart of the nation. Think of the suppression of the slave-trade, and of the growing horror of capital punishment, and of cruelty to the poor animals; and of the awakening sense in the world of how barbarously up to the present time it has treated women! And war too—' Lady Grace went on, getting more eager, 'think how fast we are out-growing that! England at any rate will never watch the outbreak of another war, with all its inevitable cruelties, without giving at least one sob that shall make all Europe pause and listen. Indeed, we must not forget how the entire substance of religion is ceasing to be a mass of dogmas, and is becoming embodied in practice and in action.'

'Quite true, Lady Grace,' said Mr. Luke. Lady Grace was just going to have given a sign for rising; but Mr. Luke's assent detained her. 'As to war,' he went on, 'there may, of course, be different opinions. Questions of policy may arise——' ('As if any policy,' murmured Lady Grace, 'could justify us in such a thing!') 'but religion—yes, that, as I have been trying to teach the world, is the great and important point on which culture is beginning to cast its light—and with just the effect which you describe. It is true that culture is at present but a little leaven hid in a barrel of meal; but still it is doing its work slowly; and in the matter of

religion—indeed, in all matters, for religion rightly understood embraces all——’ (‘I *do* like to hear Mr. Luke talk sometimes,’ murmured Lady Grace), ‘its effect is just this—to show us that religion in any civilised, any reasonable, any sweet sense, can never be found except embodied in action; that it is, in fact, nothing but right action, pointed—winged, as it were—by right emotion, by a glow, an aspiration—an aspiration towards God——’ (Lady Grace sighed with feeling)—‘not of course,’ Mr. Luke went on confidentially, ‘that petulant Pedant of the theologians—that irritable angry Father, with the very uncertain temper—but towards—’

‘An infinite, inscrutable, loving Being,’ began Lady Grace, with a slight moisture in her eyes.

‘Quite so,’ said Mr. Luke, not waiting to listen, ‘towards that great Law—that great verifiable tendency of things—that great stream whose flowing such of us as are able are now so anxiously trying to accelerate. There is no vain speculation about creation, and first causes, and consciousness here, which are matters we can never verify, and which matter nothing to us——’

‘But,’ stammered Lady Grace aghast, ‘do you mean to say that—but it surely must matter something whether God made the world, and is conscious of what we do, and will help us——’

‘Not two straws—not that,’ said Mr. Luke smiling, with a confidential fillip of his finger and thumb.

Lady Grace was thunderstruck.

‘But,’ again she stammered, softly and eagerly, ‘unless you say that there is no personal——’

Mr. Luke disliked the word *personal* so much, that he even winced if he had to speak of personal talk.

‘My dear Lady Grace,’ he said, in a tone of surprised remonstrance, ‘you are talking like a Bishop.’

‘Well, certainly,’ said Lady Grace rising, and struggling, she hardly knew how, into a smile, ‘*nolo episcopari*. You see I do know a little Latin, Mr. Luke.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Luke with a bow, as he pushed back a chair for her, ‘and a bit that has more wisdom in it than all other ecclesiastical Latin put together.’

‘Damn it!’

Such was the terrible exclamation that astounded the gentlemen, as soon as the last trailing skirt had rustled out of the dining-room. It was soon discovered to have proceeded from Mr. Saunders, and was almost the first sound he had uttered since dinner began.

‘What can be the matter?’ was inquired by several voices.

‘My fool of a servant,’ said Mr. Saunders sullenly, ‘has, I find,

in packing, wrapped up my shaving-brush in my "Disproof of God's Existence!"

'H'f!' shuddered Mr. Rose, shrinking from Mr. Saunders's somewhat piercing tones, and resting his forehead on his hand; 'my head aches sadly. I think I will go out on the terrace, and join the ladies.'

'And the whole document,' Mr. Saunders went on, 'has become illegible.'

'You were quite right, Laurence,' said Mr. Luke, ignoring Mr. Saunders, 'in what you were saying just now about modern sentiment. It has, within a limited circle, undoubtedly developed itself during the present century in a very remarkable way, and one of the chief reasons of this is, that it has given up drawing grotesque inferences from itself. We see the beauty of things and actions, and we rest content with that; we rest content, and study it, instead of wandering away into foolish theories; and accordingly this beauty repays us by unfolding itself to us more fully, and making us familiar with its more delicate colours. This is true especially of distinctly moral subjects, though, as you say, it may be more immediately obvious in others. But if you want to see an illustration of the whole thing—the advance won by modern culture in our entire mental state—just look at the Tenth Book of Augustine's *Confessions*, and compare his views of life with ours. He classified, as we learn from his Commentary on the Eighth Psalm, all the evils of life under three heads—sensuous pleasure, self-respect, and curiosity: and in his *Confessions* we see exactly what he meant by this. He there reveals to us a state of mind that is really little less than appalling. All those exquisite impressions of outer Nature, which we value so highly, he expresses his dread and abhorrence of, just in proportion as he is able to feel them; and he is even only lenient to the delicate pleasures of smell, to us so suggestive and often so full of memories, because his nature was apparently not fine enough to appreciate them. Colour, light, and music, however—all these are things for him to resist and to beware of. But worse far than this, not only is our sensuous nature to be stunted instead of trained, but our mental nature also, and in an even greater degree. The great struggle of our life is, after all, not with the desire of pleasure, but with the desire of knowledge—with curiosity—with the craving for light. And Augustine,' said Mr. Luke, pushing his dessert-plate away from him, 'was the most cultured of all the Fathers, and, considering the early date at which he lived, had in some ways a real insight into Christianity; but ah, how small, how partial even that best insight was! However, we will talk of all this afterwards, Laurence, with your Roman

Catholic friend, who is really in many ways a very intelligent young lady—and quite wide awake, I have no doubt, to some of the grotesquenesses of what she considers to be her creed.'

'And is that really so?' exclaimed Mr. Saunders, with a sudden glee in his voice. 'Does Augustine *really* speak of the desire of knowledge and of curiosity in that way?'

'He does,' said Mr. Luke slowly, with a look of grave surprise at Mr. Saunders's question.

'I am *very* glad to hear that,' said Mr. Saunders. 'I had been told of the fact before—indeed, I have mentioned it with some emphasis in a work I am preparing.'

'I can show you the passage, if you like,' said Mr. Luke.

'Thank you, no,' said Mr. Saunders. 'The force of a passage, I think, is often weakened by its context.'

'You would make an excellent theologian, Mr. Saunders,' said Dr. Jenkinson.

CHAPTER II.

"Thus, little by little, have these inward faculties, these susceptibilities of spirit, gone on developing; getting stronger, and more complex, and more delicate; until in these latter days of ours, and in the bleak modern air——"

It was the voice of Mr. Rose. He was sitting, in reach of the light within, on the step of one of the drawing-room windows, and his audience were grouped near him on the terrace outside. When the gentlemen appeared from the dining-room, he stopped suddenly.

'I was reading,' he said, dropping his book, and speaking in a tone of half apology, 'a few paragraphs from my "Essay on Capacity," as a kind of commentary on what was said just now.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Herbert, 'that subject, Mr. Rose, the growth of modern capacity, is the very one we want to hear more of; and where could we talk about it more fittingly than in this soft summer moonlight? Now, there is that question of our feeling for Nature, for instance——'

Mr. Rose turned rapidly to his book, to find a passage to the point; but Mr. Luke, who had not forgotten Saint Augustine, was too quick for him.

'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'that reminds me. I was speaking just now, Lady Grace, of early Christian sentiment; and I took Augustine as the embodiment of all that was finest in it.'

Miss Merton looked at Mr. Luke with interest.

'Yes,' he said, turning to her, 'I wanted to talk of this to you—for in one point at least we agree, even professedly—the doctrine

of development; and you will be able in a special way to understand this instance of it. Well, here is a specimen of the most refined sentiment of theological Christianity about the most refining of all sensuous pleasures. The eyes, says Augustine, love fair and various forms, and shining and lovely colours; and all day long they are before me, and solicit my contemplation. "For" (and this exquisite sentence I remember in his very words) "the Light, that queen of colours, bathing all that we can look upon, from morning till evening, let me go where I will, will still keep gliding by me in unnumbered guises, and soothes me whilst I am busy at other things, and am thinking nothing of her." And now, what return does he make to the light for all its constant service to him? Does he thank it? does he praise it? does he seek it? No! he prays to his God that he may be delivered from its insidious snares; he envies the blindness of Tobit, and describes himself as "earnestly groaning" under the temptations of these eyes of his flesh. There,' Mr. Luke continued, 'we have in a most pointed form the barbarising results of the old theological religion. And now, put side by side with this the following expression of the religion of sweet reason, such as culture reveals it to us. It deals with exactly the same sense, and the same pleasures:—

What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could be read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request:'

(A long sigh of profound and admiring emotion here escaped from Mr. Stockton.)

'Rapt into still communion, that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

There!' exclaimed Mr. Luke in conclusion, 'look now on this picture, and on that! Consider culture, and theology! Compare Augustine and Wordsworth. And Augustine himself, let us re-

member, was as far beyond the Christians of his own time as Wordsworth is beyond Augustine.'

'I should hardly have thought,' said Laurence, 'that Augustine was afraid of the pleasures of light and sight as they were enjoyed by Wordsworth; for I can hardly fancy that he could have had the least conception of them. Our feelings for Nature seem to me to be something quite peculiar to our own times—a new heritage that we may all of us more or less have part in. I strongly disapprove, as a rule, of dwelling on my own emotions, still more, of talking to other people about them; but I often look back upon a certain early walk I took one spring morning in the gardens here. The fresh softness that was in the air, and all the wandering scents, like dreams or prophecies of summers gone or coming, and the wet light glistening on the dewy leaves, seemed to go at once to the soul—to "melt into me," as into Wordsworth's herdsman. Once I surprised myself stooping under a dripping bough, to look upwards at a yellow flower, and watch it lonely against a background of blue sky; and once I started to find myself quite lost in staring at a red rock, gleaming amongst shrubs and ivy, which a plant of periwinkle spangled with a constellation of purple stars. The colour, the shape, the smell of every leaf and flower—each seemed to touch me like a note of music; and the bloom of morning mist was over everything.'

'Ah!' said Mrs. Sinclair, with some feeling, 'how those spring mornings make one sick with longing!'

'Yes,' said Laurence, 'I'm afraid it is not always with thanksgiving and praise that they fill us. The feeling is one, I think, of a mixing together of outward and inward things—our whole inward lives passing out of us into Nature; Nature melting into us, and growing part of our inner lives, so that all our hopes and fears and memories become embodied things, touching us in scents of flowers, in the breath of the air, in the sparkle of water, or mixing, like Hamadryads, their beings with the trees. This kind of feeling it is that seems to me so peculiar to our own times. The actual facts and beauties of Nature have been observed and taken pleasure in, no doubt, by the finer minds in all ages—often to a very great degree; but this is a question not of degree, but of kind. It is not that our feeling in the matter is stronger; but it is made up of different elements. Could I have described my own state of mind, during my morning walk, to a man of another time, he would not have understood me; he would have thought me raving. And my case is not peculiar. Had it been, I should not have spoken about it. But what I felt, was simply an example of what we all *feel*; and in so far as we do feel it, our minds are more highly

organised than the minds of the past generations that did not feel it. And that what I say is true,' Laurence went on, 'and that I am not only dreaming about my own private emotions, you can see a very curious proof in the literature of our day—especially in certain parts of it, which, as literature, are least successful. I mean a certain class of novels: not the works of the greater novelists, still less the works of the professional novel-manufacturers; not these, but a sort of production almost peculiar to our own time—the novels of amateurs, who write perhaps but a single book during their whole lives; and that one, with the simple aim of pouring out their own feelings for themselves to contemplate, or of explaining to themselves or others their own histories.'

'And so,' said Mr. Storks, 'you would gauge the refinement of the age by its silliest novels?'

'I think we too often forget,' said Laurence, 'that a very silly book may be evidently the work of a very clever person; and may show its author possessed of every gift except that of literature. And in many of the poor novels I am speaking of, the wretchedness, the inadequacy of the expression, the sickly or half-insane manner, really calls our attention more strongly to the delicacy, the depth, the refinement of what it has been endeavoured to express. I was reading a girl's novel in the train the other day, called "*Love in a Life*." It might have stung the dullest reviewer into the most caustic of wits, by its long spasms of ungrammatical sentiment and its want of knowledge of the world: but there was a something all through it, that its authoress was trying to utter, that reminded me of Ariel trying to escape from his tree. What, Lady Ambrose! have *you* written a novel? No? Then why are you looking so mysterious and so full of meaning?'

'Go on, Mr. Laurence,' said Lady Ambrose. 'I'll show you by and bye.'

'As for all this feeling about Nature,' Laurence went on, 'I don't know that by itself it is worth much; but it is an index and an example of what is worth more. Take, as I said at dinner, the modern treatment of love. Study it as it is revealed in literature—in these foolish novels even that I am speaking of—and you will find the same development, the same increased complexity.'

'Yes,' said Allen, 'I quite agree with you. I dare say I have not much right to judge,' he went on, blushing, 'for I speak from books, and I am not a great reader. But still, as far as I know anything of the love-poetry of this and of other times, the poetry of this seems to me in its tone to be the highest. It seems to make the passion a thing with more meaning, and with a higher,

a wider, and a more reasonable influence over all life. I am thinking of two poets of our own day especially. Shakespeare may have exhibited the working of love more powerfully than they; yet I am sure he never conceived its meaning and its nature so deeply. No heroine of his could have understood Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese; nor any hero of his, her husband's love lyrics. It seems, indeed, to me a thing peculiarly modern, this notion of love as something which, once truly attained, would, as Browning says,

make Time break,
Letting us pent-up creatures through
Into Eternity, our due.

'Ah!' murmured Mrs. Sinclair, 'but suppose there is no eternity! I think we had better take what we can, and be thankful.'

'What, Lord Allen!' said Lady Ambrose, 'and is Mr. Robert Browning a better poet than Shakespeare? I always thought Shakespeare was *quite* our best.'

'It is not a question,' said Laurence, as Allen did not speak, 'of different poets, both of different ages. I have often wondered myself how far Faust would have appealed to the author of Hamlet, and whether all the spiritual action of the drama, in so far as it relates to the heroine, might not be lost upon him. But whatever might have been the case with Shakespeare himself, such at least would have been the case with Shakespeare's age. And to go back again to external nature—here is an excellent instance of our modern relation to it. Take the celebrated love-song in Maud—one of the most typical of all modern poems—and think of the way in which its deep passionate meaning is conveyed to you:

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,
And the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

What a passion is here! We almost hear the lover's pulses as they painfully beat quicker. Our breath catches with his; and we long and long with his longing. And yet hardly a word about his feelings is said directly. The secret is echoed back to us from the scene and from the summer night. It is the milk-bloom of the acacia, the musk of the roses, the stir of the morning breeze, that tells it all to us as if they were living things, and as if a human

passion had passed into them for a soul. Now, would the world have understood this in any other times but ours? I don't think even Shakespeare's Jessica would, nor Dante's Beatrice, nor Petrarch's Laura, nor Horace's Lydia, nor Plato's Diotima, nor Homer's Helen.'

'Listen!' exclaimed Mr. Rose, as soon as Laurence stopped; 'will you let me read this one passage out of my Essay, which bears upon this very point—in fact, sums up exactly what you have been saying. "But chief amongst the new things which the heart of man has come to the understanding of, is the passion of love, in its distinctly modern form. The goddess of this love is no longer the Aphrodite of the Greeks, or the Mary of the Christians. She is a mysterious hybrid being, in whose veins is the blood of both of them. She is Mary in her desire of the Creator; she is Aphrodite in her desire of the creature; and in her desire of the creation, she is also Artemis. Into the strange passion of which hers is the tutelage, there have melted the sounds of woods and of waters, and the shapes and the hues of mountains, and the savour of airs and winds, and the odours of all flowers. All the joys, indeed, of the senses have fallen into it, like streams into one sea. And with the joys of the spirit it has been likewise. But whereas the senses have contributed their joys mainly, the spirit has contributed its sorrows and pains as well. Throughout this love, despite its fulness of life, there yet runs also a constant taint of death, of which it needs cleansing—grotesque troubles and misgivings of conscience, and cloistral meditations, and fantastic repentances. For this very reason, however, is it the more wholly expressive to us of the man's inner development. It shows us how all his desires, senses, and powers of feeling have been growing together, and coalescing into a single organism, capable of quite new sets of pleasures, and responding to far finer movements from without."'

'Ehem!' said Mr. Luke, clearing his throat very loud, 'of course, if we leave out of view all the more important points at issue, this is a very true description of the work of culture; which is, as Mr. Rose says, to make us sensitive to things in themselves, without passing carelessly away from them, as the Greeks and the Christians have done, to personal causes, and deities, and what not, which are inferred to be somewhere or other in the background. And we have just had some very good illustrations given us of the results of getting rid of this barbarous child's-play. No sooner did we in these latter days learn not to pass away from Nature than she repaid us for our trust and wisdom, and melted, with all her beauties, into us. This, however, is but half the matter. Conduct, righteousness—' said Mr. Luke, pausing and looking up into the sky.

But while he was pausing, a rustling sound of paper became audible in the direction of Lady Ambrose.

'I really do believe,' said Laurence, 'that Lady Ambrose *has* written a novel, although she denies it; and there, she is going to read a bit of it now, as a specimen of her own culture.'

'No,' said Lady Ambrose, 'really and truly. And if I had written a novel, Mr. Laurence, I should not have the cruelty to inflict it upon you. No; but what I have here,' she said, producing a manuscript from her pocket, 'though it is not mine, is next door to a novel, and in some respects better than one. It is a sort of memoir of herself, written by a certain lady I know. I am betraying no confidence in showing it to you; as she herself has lent it to a good many friends, and as long as her name is not mentioned, she wants to have it circulated; she has, in fact, consulted me about having it printed. Now, I want you, Mr. Laurence, to look through some of it, and tell me if the writer is not really a person of culture. Perhaps you would not mind reading out a little of it.'

'Am I to read it all through?' asked Laurence, as he took the seat which Mr. Rose gave up to him in the window.

'No, no,' said Lady Ambrose. 'Just pick out the best bits—a page here, and a page there.'

'Well,' said Laurence, 'I will, at any rate, start with the beginning. Now, are all of us ready to be let into the secrets of a young lady's soul? "One often feels a longing—who has not felt it?—in the hurry and trouble of life to pause for a little while and look back upon the past, which we too too often forget, and see what it is we have grown from. We long to see how it has fared with ourselves—our own selves—our characters. We long actually to realise what these are, what they might have been, and what they have become: to trace the histories of our capabilities and our longings, our loves, our sorrows, our regrets—and, ah! our sins. Yes, often and often have I longed to do this, in sunnier days; and now, when the world is pressing on me more heavily, and a sick life-weariness has settled on my spirit, I at last snatch time to do so. I have come, indeed, to one of those halting-places in the years——'

'I think you may skip the beginning,' said Lady Ambrose, 'it's a little dull. Turn over a page or two.'

"How strangely do come back to me those irrevocable days——" Will that do?' asked Laurence.

'Yes,' said Lady Ambrose, 'I think so—go on there.'

"——those distant, irrevocable days, when the world was all new to me, and each experience was fresh and delightful, and I

knew nothing of what self-reproach could mean. Ah, me! how times have changed since then! I sometimes fancy that I am hardly worthy now to look back upon my own past. I was gifted naturally with a curious warmth and sincerity of nature, that must have been very beautiful. But my peculiar gift, my own own gift, was a power of sympathy with others, by which quite naturally I used to throw myself into their places, understand their difficulties, and excite myself with their interests. When I was yet quite a child, that, I know, is what men felt in me—I never cared for boys—one man especially. It was then that life began for me, and what it all meant broke on me like a revelation. I, in my simplicity, never dreamt of his being more than a friend—I am not sure even that he was my dearest friend. I certainly never tried to charm him. But I did charm him, nevertheless, quite unconsciously. And he loved me passionately, devotedly, child as I was. Ah, God! when will another ever feel the same for me? And I—“O, my lost, my rejected friend! come back to me,” sometimes I still cry in my solitude; “poor, and obscurely connected as you are, come back to me!” I shall never forget—poor little me!—the solemn shock of the moment, how my heart stood still, how all the blood came rushing into my cheek, when all of a sudden, as it seemed to me, and without any warning, he asked me to be his wife. Everything seemed to grow dizzy before me. It seemed to me as if the day of judgment had come. (Alas! will there ever be a day of judgment at all? is what I now ask.) I don’t know what I said. I only remember distinctly my throwing myself into my mother’s arms, and crying like a child—and I was one—as if my very heart would break. “I am only a child!” that is what I said. “Oh, mother, I am such a child!” The pathos of the scene often comes back to me even now—a shadowy timid memory, wondering if I shall give it harbour. I remember, too, how I said my prayers that night, and how I asked God——”

“I think you needn’t read that,” said Lady Ambrose; “go on a page or two further.”

““I spent much of my time sketching.” Shall I go on there?” said Laurence. ““I had always a curiously appreciative eye for natural beauty.” Will that do? Or shall I go on here—I think this is better—at the next paragraph?—“Oh, the great waste of love in this our world.””

“Yes, go on there,” said Mrs. Sinclair and several others.

““Oh, the great waste of love in this our world! How many a true heart would have given itself to me, could I only honestly and unreservedly have opened out to it all the depths of mine, and received it! And why did I never do so? It may be that I

have known none who could really understand me—none that I could really love. But does that excuse me, not for not loving them, but for acting as though I did love them, and so ruining their lives and searing my own?—sending them in the end to their brandy-bottles, and their gaming-hells, and their wild Cremornes; and myself—to the mental state in which I am now! True, I have thus come to a knowledge of life beyond what most women of my years attain to—but a bitter knowledge. Could I dream that such a prayer could be answered, ‘Take back the knowledge,’ I would say, ‘and oh, give instead to me the love that I long for.’ But I—what right have I to pray, who have lost both hope and faith? And yet—I still am young; and is there no hope for me? I have not lost whatever attraction I once had. Men admire me still; some, I believe, fancy that they love me. But their love seems to me only a far-off hollow mockery. They can none of them know my heart, or understand my memories, or quiet my unrest. Have I, then, lost it for ever—lost all hope of love? and must I quietly take up with my unappreciated loneliness? If it is so, if indeed it is so, surely I have brought it on myself. Was there not one—not my earliest lover—but another, who, with a devotion I understood far more fully, laid himself at my feet, and offered me all his man’s devotion and his man’s sympathy! Why, why in my madness did I send him from me, penniless as he was—but what of that?—driving him to death, and leaving myself to desolation? How does the image of his pale still face upturned towards the Indian star-light, with eyes which no star-light could ever touch any more, rise before me—his hand on his breast, and clasping with its last grasp a locket with my picture in it! Yes, I see him there, though I did not see him. I know how he must have looked, with his heart bullet-pierced—noble, beautiful in death. Unworthy as I was of you, my true-hearted one, too late, too late, did I learn my own unworthiness! I was sitting in the window of our house at Ventnor, when the letter came that told me. It was evening; and I had been looking out through the summer twilight at the sea and at the sunset. As I read the letter, it dropped from my hand. I gave a gasp. I repressed a shrill cry. I felt a choking sensation in my throat; but I was very proud, and I even repressed a sob. I only, with entire calmness, turned my head towards the sea, and sighed a sigh deep-drawn as if my soul were in it. My cheek was pale, my eyes were wild and wistful—full of a solemn new earnestness. What the exact thoughts were that were busy in me, I cannot tell. All I am conscious of was this, that far, far off were the great crimson space of evening sky and a trail of rippled splendour on the sea. One great violet cloud fringed with

a border of living fire, that seemed to be eating into it, hung just above the place where the sun had gone down; and over this, in a pale liquid space of hushed colour, was the evening star, trembling like a tear-drop. I was always sensitive to colour; and somehow or other this sunset relieved me—went right to my heart with a quiet sense of healing. That evening was, I think, one of the great points in my life. I seemed ever after to see my own character more clearly—how deep were my own capacities for feeling, and also how strangely Nature could enter in and comfort me, when all human sympathy would have seemed intrusive. That night, when I went upstairs, I hardly knew myself. There was a wild look in my eyes—an inexpressible mournfulness and an inexpressible longing. Two or three long tendrils of hair had got loose, and hung over my forehead with a kind of wild languor. ‘What is there that men can see in me to attract them?’ I had often said to myself. I think then a something of what it was began to dawn upon me. ‘And he—he, the true, the gallant, the devoted, he has lost all this,’ I gasped, turning away from the glass; and, throwing myself on my knees by the bed, the sob I had so long suppressed broke forth, and I tried to pray——” h’m—and so on, and so on, and so on——’

‘You needn’t read all those bits about the prayers,’ said Lady Ambrose. ‘I don’t think it is quite reverent.’

‘Well,’ said Laurence, ‘here’s a new stage of her life. Let us go on here. “And now, from the bleak desolation of my present existence, I peer wistfully out on all sides, and see if any will bring the love to me that I so much crave for.”’

‘Poor thing!’ said Mrs. Sinclair, with a little sigh.

‘I’m afraid,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘I must mention, by the way, that the lady is married, and remarkably well married too.’

““Here in the old house with its quiet gables,”” Laurence went on reading, “I sit in my own room, and watch the sunset dying away over the yellowing autumn woods, itself the colour of a belated autumn leaf. I watch it alone—yes, thank heaven, alone. I manage to steal for an hour or two away from those people of whom the house is full. Who is there amongst them that can understand me? whose spirit meets mine on equal terms? I laugh with them, I talk with them, I jest with them, and they think they know me. But, ah! the weariness, the *far-offness* of it all ——””

‘It is entirely her own fault,’ said Lady Ambrose, ‘that she has these people here. Her husband is devoted to the country and the turnips for their own sake, and would never see a soul but a few of the neighbouring squires and parsons, if she did not make him,

In London, you know, she's nearly always by herself. At least,' Lady Ambrose added, 'he's very rarely with her.'

'A little further on,' said Laurence, 'it seems that all the visitors have gone; and she has been to pay a visit to the parson's wife.'

'You may be sure she was quite by herself, if she did that,' said Lady Ambrose.

'Here,' Laurence went on, 'is a description of the visit. "What sweet eyes the little thing had! What a look of trustfulness in her face! A good and pure, and therefore a happy woman, if ever there was one. What a trust in those eyes of hers! What an innocence! What a sweet content! There is no purple shadow of care under *her* eyes—(people say I darken mine artificially. Alas! heaven knows, there is little need for me to do that!)—there is no secret trouble discernible in *her* lips—no languor in *her* air! What does she know of life, with its troubles, its distractions, its sins? Ah! were I but like her—I, world-worn and world-weary, sickened with pomps, and vanities, and soiled affections, and hollow homage—were I but worthy that she should talk to me! 'Don't talk to me,' I felt inclined to say. 'You wouldn't if you knew—if you *could* know! Oh, how far better are you than I! You little dream when I sit demurely in my seat in the village church, bowing at the Glorias, or kneeling with my face hid in my hands,—you little imagine what a woman you see there. You little dream what strange thoughts unbidden mix themselves up for me with the hymn-music; what wild regrets, what bitter reveries, what strange scenes and figures, fill my mind as I kneel before the Communion-table. Why could I not have been content like you with a quiet lot, a toiling honest husband like you? Is there not something holy even in his dull sermons, if you only look on them in the lovely light of duty? Why does my heart vibrate with the troubled wailing music of many sorrows, many longings, of which you do not even dream the existence? Oh! what a far higher, far nobler woman are you than I, in every way!'"

'And now,' said Lady Ambrose, seeing that Laurence had shut the book, 'I want to know if all this is a specimen of culture, and if you would call the writer a cultivated person.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Herbert, who was sitting by himself a little outside the group, and who had hardly spoken at all since dinner; 'yes,' he said, in his gravest of accents, 'I am anxious to hear that.'

'Because,' said Lady Ambrose, 'the authoress is one of the most delightful people I know, to talk to; though she rather dabbles in free-thought and that kind of thing, of which, of course, I

don't approve. But if this is what you call culture—though, I think, in her case, it's a little bit affected, you know—but then she never lets you see all this when you talk to her—I quite see I was wrong in thinking culture priggish, and bookish, and all that. In fact, it seems to me more like taste and feeling: and, of course, that is what one could always wish to find in one's friends, if one could get it.'

There was a pause.

'Yes,' said Mr. Rose at last, slowly and meditatively, 'I think that what we have just heard is certainly a sign and an outcome of what we mean by culture. Much is no doubt to be got over in the style; nor even apart from that, do I consider the culture perfect. But I think the example the more instructive for this very reason, that the mind in question is not one apparently that is in itself very superior—'

'Oh, but you mustn't judge her only by her writings,' said Lady Ambrose. 'When you meet her, she is not a bit like them.'

'Probably,' said Leslie. 'Amateurs in writing rarely are. The aim of their writings is, in fact, to express what they can't express when you meet them. Their writings are the footnotes of their lives, telling you that which they have not skill enough to bring into the text.'

'She draws beautifully,' Lady Ambrose went on, 'and is really the brightest of creatures—so witty, and with such a sense of the ridiculous! And really, to hear her tell a bit of scandal—not that I at all approve of scandal myself—I always think it's so uncharitable—'

'I,' said Donald Gordon gently, 'have the very highest opinion of scandal. It is founded on the most sacred of things—that is, Truth, and it is built up by the most beautiful of things—that is, Imagination.'

'And as for what you say about style, Mr. Rose,' went on Lady Ambrose, 'it is rather jerky, and so forth, I admit. But that's the way with us women. Indeed, I often think that if women had invented language, it would have consisted mainly of interjections, and that its only stop would have been a note of exclamation.'

Mr. Rose was much annoyed at these interruptions.

'But besides all this,' he went on, as soon as Lady Ambrose had ceased, 'there is another fault to find with the mental state exhibited in your friend's memoirs. She is too much "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of regret, and doubt, and hesitancy. Still, however, she exhibits distinct traces of all those higher capacities

of which we have been speaking, as special acquisitions of modern generations. There is the same new sense of the blending together of the outer and the inner worlds; there is the same delicate discrimination between the æsthetic aspects of the different stages of life, and the nice gradation of moral colours: there is the same fine self-consciousness, and consequent endeavour to give tone and quality to her memories as they pass by her, in exquisite and complex ways. Indeed, as I said before, I think this case more instructive from its very defects and failings, as showing how men's minds—even if not exceptionally gifted—have come to be organisms of increased delicacy and capacity, except when stunted by the necessity of work, or of occupation that is other than voluntary, and chosen for any object beyond itself.

'Of course,' said Mr. Luke, 'all this emotion may be very good under certain circumstances; but in the present case, Lady Ambrose must forgive me if I say so, I think it extremely bad—far worse than none. It exhibits, I do not deny, traces of real culture—a fineness, a delicacy of capacity, that is essentially modern. But—and I do not speak of this case only, but of life with its present capacities in general—mere feeling, especially when turned solely inwards, no matter how delicate and fine it be, will do nothing but decay and breed corruption, unless reason and intellect and purpose enter into it, to season and preserve it, and give it direction.'

'Yes,' said Allen, 'all this refinement of feeling, and extreme sensibility to this and that and the other, may be very good—I dare say it is. But still, if left to itself, it must tend—indeed, I have often seen it tend—to make men effeminate and unfit for work. Now, I dare say Mr. Luke will call me a barbarian, but I am going to venture to say that, in spite of all that is said against it, that barbarous thing sport—shooting, deer-stalking, hunting—is of great value, especially to people who are not barbarians, as a kind of mental tonic. It makes them active and spirited: it gives them presence of mind, and a readiness to exert themselves; and though sport may in one sense be a self-indulgence, it is a self-indulgence that is constantly teaching all sorts of self-denial.'

'My dear Lord Allen,' said Mr. Luke, 'I most entirely agree with you. It does seem, I admit, at first sight, a somewhat singular thing, that the result of the latest civilisation should be to give men leisure to return to the occupations of their earliest barbarism—and those, too, deprived of their own justification—necessity. But still these barbarous sports must, as you say, if not pursued too exclusively, give a valuable moral tone to minds whose refinement might else become weakness. Only the worst

of the matter, as it actually stands, is this—that the majority of people who do follow sport are the very people who have no refinement that needs strengthening, but merely an idle aimless strength that needs refining. And you must remember, Lord Allen, that the man who is gluttonous of aimless bodily action is no better than the man who is an epicure in aimless mental emotion.’

‘And so,’ said Donald Gordon, ‘the members of our society—the aristocracy of our ideal state—must unite both characters. They must have delicate taste and feeling, and yet not be effeminate; and they will be content that partridges and foxes shall die exclusively for them, without their living exclusively for partridges and foxes.’

‘But,’ said Dr. Jenkinson very slowly, and in a voice of sharp softness, ‘you must do something besides looking at pretty scenery, and falling in love, and shooting. I *think* you must do something besides that to make life complete.’

‘Ah! Jenkinson,’ said Mr. Luke, ‘of course we must! The great thing has been left out even now. We have already taste and courage; but if we would be perfect, there is one thing we lack yet—reason. Could we but look forward to a time when all or even the greater part of those one meets would unite these priceless gifts, there might then indeed be some satisfaction in life. All these are included in true culture, but our friends do not seem to have quite realised this yet.’

‘On the contrary,’ said Mr. Stockton, ‘it is the very point on which I would lay stress. I quite agree with what has been said hitherto, that the present century has seen the soul of man widening out, with all its marvellous powers, and displaying new riches of beauty like an unfolding flower. I quite agree, too, that this flower craves for a finer climate, which we can at present give it only in a Utopian dream. But while I value—none can value more—our higher flights of imagination, our finer forms of love, and poetry, and worship, and religion, I am not blind to the great agent that is at the bottom of all this change. I mean, the emancipated human intellect, with all its manifold apparatus of discovery and conquest—that great liberator of life and thought. And if we wish to imagine any higher development of society, not only shall we have to imagine the prevalence of delicate æsthetic faculties, and gallant moral qualities, but we must imagine also, and before all things, the freest play of the intellect, which will be the guide and the director of all. We must imagine each soul—if I may use the word without any unwarranted associations—struggling by itself to live its own life, to shape its own religion;

letting its light shine before men if it will, so that others if they will may follow it, but using no coercion moral or otherwise; all asperities being softened, and a universal charity being produced by the enlightened conviction, that in this highest sphere of our activities nothing final and finite can ever be arrived at.'

'May I ask you one question,' broke in Mr. Herbert suddenly, 'a question which at times, I confess, seems to me not without importance! Will this religion of yours, as you told us in the afternoon it was based on the discrimination between good and evil, also involve a discrimination between life and death? Will it, I mean, point to any other life beyond this, or will it not? Is whatever evil and sorrow we patiently suffer in life a thing which, if it do not bring its reward to us here, will never bring us any reward at all? And shall we call the death of the noble sufferer blessed, for no other reason than that he rests from his labours, and his works do not follow him?'

'Dear me! dear me!' said Dr. Jenkinson petulantly to himself. 'These sort of questions ought never to be asked in that hard, abrupt way. You can't answer them—you can't answer them.'

Mr. Stockton, however, found no difficulty with *his* answer.

'As to that,' he said, 'each man would think as he pleased, and his thoughts would shape themselves to meet the deepest needs of his life. In the state of society we long for, the belief in a future life would be open to all to accept or to reject. The only thing to guard against would be any definite public opinion on the matter, one way or the other; for in any definite public opinion, remember, there is the germ of all dogmatism and of all persecution. The great thing needed to secure the world's progress, and a really noble and enlightened life, is perfect freedom for the human mind—unshackled freedom—and, we must not forget this, definite knowledge, definite facts, collected by science, and research, and travel, and touched with passion by individual feeling and by art, for the free mind to work upon.'

'I wonder what such a Utopia would be really like?' said Miss Merton.

'It's outer aspect I have described already,' said Mr. Rose.

'And so,' said Mr. Herbert, suddenly rising from his seat, and surveying the whole party, 'your notion of an ideal state of society is one where all the finer capacities of feeling—feeling for what is pretty, and beautiful, and sad, and tender, and ridiculous,—are developed to the utmost, and shared by all; where you will all be humorous, and witty, and well-informed, and willing to fall in love with one another; where you will be able to look at nice views, and at nice pictures, and at nice girls; and where you will

all think a great deal, and wonder what it all means, and also, as befits enlightened men, whether it means anything. And the industrious amongst you will discover all manner of things, with regard to our own likeness to monkeys; and the idle amongst you will wonder at these discoveries, and talk about them. And you will travel and collect new ideas; and in your town life you will exchange these ideas with each other; and in the country solitudes—which, if you would enjoy them properly, you must keep very solitary—you will think these ideas over; and altogether, life will have for you a very fair complexion. And now—I see the ladies are wishing to move indoors, but let me ask you this one thing first—a perfect aristocracy, you said, would imply the perfect well-being of all the rest of the state as well. Now, I want to know what the other classes who look up to you as guides and models will find in *their* lives that is worth living for. Will you teach them also to be enlightened, and to quote poetry, and to be inquiring and sceptical?’

‘I hope not, indeed,’ broke in Lady Ambrose with vigour; ‘and as to our being their models, Mr. Herbert, I’m sure you can’t mean that. It seems to me one of the very worst things in these times that they will take us for their models. Do you know, I think it is really a good deal our fault, and that it comes very much from our giving our maids so many of our old clothes to wear. That sort of thing puts notions into their heads. And then besides,’ she went on, getting very solemn in her tone, ‘I really do think we do a great deal of harm without thinking of it, by the way in which we speak our minds out before servants, and that sort of people, without in the least considering all the mischief we may be doing. And now, do you know, I have a plan to propose, which would, I think, make our ideal state a really good and contented place. The upper classes should speak a different language from the lower classes. Of course we should be able to speak theirs, but they would not be able to speak ours. And then, you see, they would never hear us talk, or read our books, or get hold of our ideas; which, after all, is what does all the mischief.’

‘Come, good people,’ said Lady Grace, ‘this is the third drop of rain that has fallen. I think we had better go indoors.’

‘I think,’ said Dr. Jenkinson to Mr. Herbert, ‘that things are better as they are. I *think* so. And Christianity,’ he added, turning to Mr. Stockton, ‘really embraces all religions, even any honest denial of itself.’

The End.

A Family Party in the Piazza of St. Peter.

BY T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRYSTING-PLACE.

It is a lovely morning in June, and Rome is looking beautiful exceedingly, with a beauty that is never seen by nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of every thousand of the visitors from every part of the world who yearly throng the Eternal City. The race of tourists are 'servum pecus,' as Horace calls 'imitators,' perhaps even more markedly than the rest of our imitative kind. They follow each other over the same gap in the same hedge. They do this year exactly what they did last year. This Roman Pactolus begins to ebb immediately after Easter, and the genuine Roman world is left to live and enjoy itself after its own native fashion.

And this it was preparing to do in a special manner on the morning in question; for that June morning was one of the greatest and highest of Rome's high days and holidays. On the sixtieth day after Easter in every year, the Roman church celebrates the festival of the 'Corpus Domini'—in every year from the thirtieth of the thirteenth century, when a heavenly vision commanded the blessed Giuliana of Mont Corneillon, near Liège, to establish the ceremony, till the year 1870, when, after six hundred and forty anniversaries, it took place in Rome for the last time probably for evermore.

But matters had not yet come quite to that pass with the city and its eternities; and on the occasion to which the reader's attention is invited there were yet two or three more Corpus Domini celebrations to come.

It was the most delicious hour of all the twenty-four in a Roman June day—the hour after sunrise—on that high festival, when a couple of girls emerged into the vast open space in front of St. Peter's church, from the street called the Borgo Vecchio. This space, which lies before the western front of the great church, is divided into two portions—an oblong area on which the Borgo

Vecchio opens, and which is farthest from the church, and the much larger circular piazza at the further end of it, immediately in front of the western façade of the Basilica, and surrounded by the two vast semicircular colonnades, which come out from the two angles of the church like huge arms. The first and smaller area is called the Piazza Rusticucci, the second the piazza of St. Peter's; and these two piazze, forming thus one undivided space, are the scene of the great procession which constitutes the principal part of the grand ceremonial of the day.

Already at that early hour of the morning there were many people moving in different directions about either piazza; and most of them, after considerable hesitation apparently, were taking up the positions which they deemed most favourable for securing a good view of the coming show. The two girls that have been mentioned, however, seemed to have no doubt upon the subject. Crossing the Piazza Rusticucci diagonally from the end of the Borgo Vecchio, they pressed forward eagerly with an alertness of step to which a Roman of any class or age is rarely excited, towards the end of the colonnade to the right hand of one approaching the church, and there stationed themselves at the foot of the last of the huge piers. They glanced around for an instant, and then quietly and deliberately sate themselves down on the corners of the pediment of the pier, and both of them with the same action clasping their hands around their knees, prepared to wait. Just as they seated themselves the bells in all the neighbouring belfries began one after another to strike the quarter before five.

‘Five less one quarter. We are a little bit too early, it is true; but what would you have?—girls are sure to be first at a trysting-place.’

It was the taller and more vigorous-looking of the two girls who spoke. Both were remarkable for their beauty even at Rome, where female beauty in all classes is more abundant than perhaps in any other city in the world. But they were markedly and even singularly contrasted in appearance.

Lucia Savelli, she who had spoken, was a superb specimen of the grandest type of the Roman ‘popolana,’ or woman of the people—a Roman of the Romans, born in the ‘Trastevere,’ as that portion of the city is called which stands on the right-hand side of the Tiber, and the inhabitants of which have always been deemed to have preserved the purity of their descent from the old Roman stock more unadulterated by mixture with foreign elements than any other part of the population of the city. The ‘Trasteverans’ are also famed for their beauty of form and feature, always of the

grand and magnificent sort; and Lucia Savelli was an admirable example of the type.

She was, like Shakespeare's Rosalind, 'more than common tall,' and her robust and vigorous development was perfectly proportioned to her height. An enormous wealth of glossily rippling but rather coarse raven-black hair was wound around her majestically carried and beautifully shaped small head; with an effect that to any comparing eye must have made the prevailing fashion of chignon behind and mountain atop appear more stupidly disfiguring and vulgarly tasteless than ever. The superb column of her throat, large and pillar-like in the perfection of its roundness, imparted a noble and proud expression to the general outline of her person, which might have pointed her out to the eye of a sculptor as the very model for a Juno. Brow, eyes, lips, contour of the face, and colouring were all superb. The brow was specially noble; not lofty, but very broad, and with well-shaped contours about the temples. Had this brow and the eyes alone been visible, the expression of Lucia's face would have seemed to be even aggressively stern and defiant; but the not small mouth, lighted up with brilliantly white and small teeth, and formed of lips the exquisite curving of which seemed calculated to express any amount of unspoken eloquence, had a world of sweetness and good-humour about and around it. And to make the presentment perfect and complete in all that an artistic eye could desire, Lucia, unlike her companion, was dressed in the picturesque costume of the true Roman 'popolana,' with that most becoming of all head-dresses, the flatly folded white kerchief, which a thousand drawings and pictures have made familiar to our eyes, on her head.

Ninetta—have I told you, by the by, that the name of Lucia's companion was Ninetta Innocenti?—Ninetta was in her way fully as lovely a girl as Lucia, but her way was a very different one. As to which was the more beautiful, the question would be as absurd as to ask whether a rose or a violet smells the sweetest. Undoubtedly the one would appeal more strongly to the sympathies of men of one sort, and the other to those of a different kind; and one might perhaps be able to divine something as to the characteristics of the man, of whom one should know only which of the two girls he admired most, with less fear of mistake than one could attempt to estimate the characters of the girls themselves from their appearance.

At all events there could be no doubt as to which of the girls was most artistically adapted to the setting in which her picture has to be presented to the reader. There was nothing specially or

characteristically Roman about Ninetta. Exceeding delicacy of form, of colour, of expression, was the leading characteristic of Ninetta's appearance. She was, though by no means short of stature, less tall by an inch or two than her friend; but had you seen them apart, instead of side by side, it is probable enough that the impression left upon your eye would have led you to imagine, when both were absent, that Ninetta was the taller, so much has slenderness of figure the effect of increasing apparent height, and Ninetta was very slender. Whether it were that she wore, though it was sadly poverty-stricken, the ordinary fashionable style of dress as far as the forms of it went, whereas Lucia was clad in the characteristic costume of a Trasteverina, or whether it were due to any more coquettish strain in the nature of the girl, Ninetta's slender waist was made yet more slender by a certain, not excessive, amount of pressure; whereas that of Lucia appeared as innocent of compression as the lithe round stem of an oak sapling.

Then, moreover, Ninetta was blonde, with hair of that peculiar Titianesque tint which Italians are apt to think the most beautiful of any possible hue. There was in her face none of the brown-pink colouring, which gave to Lucia's cheek the semblance of a sun-ripened peach, and spoke of the very perfection of health and vigour. She was delicately pale, with large violet-coloured liquid eyes, that looked out somewhat mournfully on the world, with an expression that betokened an emotional rather than an intellectual nature. Yet the ordinary observer would probably have judged Ninetta to have a more intellectual expression of face than Lucia. Her fair, beautifully shaped forehead was much higher than her friend's low brow; but it was also much narrower. It was a dainty, delicate, finely fashioned, and beautifully cut face—that of Ninetta Innocenti, with a slender, delicate nose, small mouth, and little round chin. Had the cheeks been a little fuller, and the jaw-bone and chin a little less narrow, the face would have been a perfect oval. As it was, the lower part of it was slenderer than the upper. There was none of the strength in the face which was so marked a characteristic in that of Lucia. It was very fair, very lovely, very excellently well fitted to conciliate love. But there was weakness in the delicacy of it,—weakness in the high and narrow, though not unintellectual forehead, and in the mobile, sensitive, and uncertain mouth and little chin.

'Ah! that comes from making appointments with them,' said Ninetta in reply to the words that had fallen from Lucia, with a little, half demure, half arch casting down of the eyes, evidently intended not for hypocrisy, but for acting as a provocation to her friend.

But Lucia's nature was too simply straightforward for any such little comedy to be effective.

'If I did not know for sure,' she said, 'that my *damo* (sweet-heart) was quite as anxious to see me as I to see him, I should not come at all! And being sure, I don't mind waiting. Besides, the grand point is to get our places; and to judge by the way the people are coming into the piazza, we are none too early for that.'

'All the same, I had rather be waited for than wait,' returned Ninetta, with a charming little toss of her head.

'Then why didn't you make your grand *damo* join our party here, and see if he would have been here by cock-crow?' said Lucia, with a laugh in her eye, but without the slightest shade of malice or even of pique in her heart. 'Were you afraid?' she added, with a sly wink and a broad frank smile that showed all the range of her regular and brilliantly white teeth.

'*Davvero*, no!' replied Ninetta with a *moue* and a shrug of her shoulders; 'but, *che! vi pare!* How can you dream of such a thing! Why, I should not wonder if he was obliged to be in attendance on the Holy Father, to-day too, of all the days in the year. Don't you know, Lucia, that he is one of the great officers—a captain. And I shall be a contessa when he takes me to his own country.'

'His own country!' exclaimed Lucia, staring at her friend; 'why, what is his country? I thought your friend was one of our own people.'

'Not at all,' said the other, with a toss of the head, which showed that characteristic readiness of the Italians to imagine that a foreign thing or person must, as a matter of course, be better and finer than the person or thing of home growth. 'Not at all! He is a great French officer, sent here by the Emperor to protect our Holy Father from his enemies.'

'Oh! a Frenchman; I did not know it,' said Lucia, and then there was silence for a minute or two between the two girls, while Ninetta's eyes scanned the new-comers, who continued to throng into the piazza, and Lucia seemed to be busy with her own thoughts.

From these she was aroused by a greeting from one who was evidently an acquaintance, but whose appearance would have made it seem to any onlooker exceedingly unlikely that he should have been such. No human being would have supposed the new-comer to be an Italian, even before he opened his lips. After he had done so, none could have doubted that he belonged to one of the branches of the great Anglo-Saxon family, either *cis-* or *trans-Atlantic*. He was a tall, spare, middle-aged man with a shrewd grey

eye, aquiline nose, brown weather-beaten healthy-looking complexion, good-humoured and even sweet mouth, and strong, resolute jaw and chin; a handsome man certainly, though with none of the manners or bearing of one; for men can give themselves beauty airs as well as women. His dress seemed to be a decided protest against the rule that bids one do at Rome as Romans do. He had a plaid shawl wrapped around his shoulders over his grey shooting jacket, notwithstanding the season, an extra-broad-leaved straw hat, trousers such as those which the caricaturists in 'Punch' used always to attribute to Lord Brougham, and thick shoes with buff cloth gaiters over them. And over all this costume there was a spick-and-span cleanness and newness, that, joined to his clear eye and cheery look, seemed almost to deserve the epithet 'brightness.'

'What, you here, Signorina Lucia! Come to see the show, and go in for a share in the benediction, eh!' said the new arrival, in that language so wonderfully spoken by old Anglo-Italians, and so yet more wonderfully understood by the quick wits and ears of the Italians trained by long use to acquaintance with the peculiarities of Anglo-Italian speech.

'*Sissignore!* One sees that even your worship does not keep the studio open to-day.'

'Of course not. I must see the sight as well as the rest. But I mean to go into the church, and to look at the folk streaming in. I had better be going at once. All alone, eh?—that is, I mean, so—no *cavaliere*, eh?' he added, glancing at Ninetta as he spoke. 'Not seen Carlo, eh?'

'Carlo will be here presently; he promised to meet us here,' replied Lucia, with an open-eyed straight look into the speaker's eyes, which seemed to protest against any possible idea that she was meeting her lover on the sly, or was ashamed of doing so, or wanted to conceal the fact from any body.

'Oh, he will, will he? Well, I suppose that I shall see you to-morrow, and perhaps him too. *A rivederci*. And so saying he walked alertly across the piazza towards the great steps leading to the Church.

'Why, who in the world is he?' asked Ninetta, who had been staring at Lucia's acquaintance with open-eyed wonder. 'What a very strange-looking man. And how queerly he talks. He must be one of those wonderful *Milordi Inglesi*, that they say are all so rich, and all mad. And I suppose you must have met with him at some of the studios.'

'È un uomo bizzarro quanto mai!—Yes, he is an odd fish, if ever there was one,' said Lucia; 'but he is not an Englishman. He is an American, which comes to much the same thing, it seems.'

Only they are a new sort discovered quite recently; and a very good thing too. For I am sure we want them.'

'Where were they found?' asked Ninetta with much interest.

'Oh, somewhere over the sea. In an island, I suppose. Some of our sailors were sailing about, looking for coral most likely, and found them. And, as I say, a very good thing too; if what I hear old folk say is true, that the Milordi Inglesi have spent nearly all their money, and have not nearly so much as they used to have. This fresh sort always have plenty. I never join in the talk you hear now-a-days against the saints. I think the Madonna is very good to us! And when these Americans have spent all their money, I have no fear that some other Inglesi will be discovered somewhere about, if we are faithful to the Holy Father, and mind what the priests tell us.'

'I like Frenchmen best, for my part,' said Ninetta.

'It is quite a different thing,' returned Lucia thoughtfully.

'I don't see that Frenchmen are a bit better than we are ourselves, for that matter.'

'Why, you don't mean to say, Lucia, that these Inglesi and Americani are any better than we are? why, they are *barbari*!' exclaimed Ninetta with much indignation.

'Yes; they are *barbari*! there is no doubt about that!' said Lucia, whose brain was evidently at work; 'but somehow they are of a different sort. And somehow everybody seems to expect that an Englishman, or one of these new sort of English, the Americans, should be able to do things which we can't do. And see now, I don't know how it is, but I myself would believe what one of them said to me, more than I would what any of our people said. Now this Signore Chianquinsi' (the name, that Lucia thus did her best to translate into sounds pronounceable by Italian organs, was Jenkins)—'I can't tell you how good he is, and—Oh! there is Carlo! I see him pushing his way through the crowd; and there is Uncle Tancredi with him; and cousin Nanni and little Clelia Braschi behind them. I dare say Carlo was kept waiting in order to come with Uncle Tancredi.'

'But, Lucia, dear, I never saw your uncle; he won't be displeased at my being with you, will he?' said Ninetta.

'Displeased! no: why should he be displeased?' said Lucia with genuine surprise.

'Only if you are all together, a family party, you know, he might not like to find a stranger —'

'*Che! vi pare!* Not a bit of it; don't imagine such a thing. Here they come. I am sure you will like Uncle Tancredi, he is such a good, kind man,' said Lucia, whose eyes were sparkling

with pleasure at the prospect of the meeting with her friends, somewhat more dancingly and joyously perhaps than was altogether due to the approach of Uncle Tancredi, genuine as had been Lucia's eulogy of him.

CHAPTER II.

A 'BUTTERO' AND HIS FAMILY.

THOUGH it was not yet six o'clock, the vast circular area enclosed by Bernini's celebrated colonnades had been filling so rapidly since the two girls had taken up their position at the foot of the last of its huge piers on the southern side, that Tancredi and the little party with him had some difficulty in making their way through the throng to the place where the two girls were. They had not to seek them; for it was evident that the rendezvous had been arranged beforehand. Nor, though some little patience was needed to thread the crowd, was the piazza yet packed nearly as closely as it would be an hour later, when the time for the appearance of the procession should approach. An Italian crowd is always the gentlest crowd in the world, as far as good-humour and the absence of all violence goes. But it is not an easy crowd to move through, for the same reason that it is not easy to traverse a herd of bullocks. No Italian dreams of moving out of the way of anyone wishing to pass him. He stands quiescent. Motion is an evil. Why should he subject himself to this evil, merely to facilitate the movement of a stranger? If the passenger must needs move on at once, let him accept the onus of moving round the obstacle. If the burly bulk which stops his way bring him also to a standstill, why it is only so much benefit conferred on him! And no Italian expects another to move out of his way. And accordingly Uncle Tancredi and his party threaded their devious way through the crowd to the pillar where the girls were now standing, having risen to their feet at the approach of their friends, slowly and perfectly patiently.

Yet Tancredi Melitta, to say nothing of the two young men who followed behind him, looked like one who would have had little difficulty in shoving any shoulders aside, however little mobile they might be. Lucia's mother, who had died so few years after her daughter's birth that the latter had no remembrance of her, had been a sister of Tancredi Melitta, who was a *buttero* of the Campagna, as his father had been before him, and as he hoped his son Nanni would be after him. And when his sister Drusilla had married, with the reluctant consent of her family, the Roman citizen and cameo-cutter Alessandro Savelli, each party to the match had been equally persuaded that they were making a *mésall-*

liance. An outsider, who had no Roman prejudices or ideas of one sort or the other to blind him, would probably have thought that the countryman's opinion on the subject was the more reasonable of the two.

If the reader has ever visited Rome, he has seen and admired many a *buttero*—a characteristic figure in the Roman streets, quite unlike any other figure to be met with in any other part of the world. Do you not remember, reader, having been struck (in the Campo Vaccino, perhaps, or in the open space between the Lateran and the neighbouring city gate) by a stalwart yet spare figure riding an exceptionally good black horse, with a long flowing tail down to his heels? The rider sits his steed admirably, with a seat rather of the military sort than of our country kind, not rising in his stirrups, but moving easily with the brisk, active amble of his steed, as if they were but one animal, moved by one and the same will. And it may well be so, for the *buttero* lives mainly in the saddle. He it is to whom is entrusted the supervision of all the horses and horned cattle on some one of the vast properties which stretch over the Roman Campagna. He has men under him for the care of the horses, others for the horned cattle. The sheep and the pigs are under other and recognisedly inferior administrations. But with the cultivation of the land, such as there is of it, he has nothing to do. This is managed exclusively by a *fattore*, whom the *buttero*, and indeed everybody else, considers to occupy a very inferior position to himself. On a large property the *buttero* would have three saddle-horses kept for him, and would take their work out of them every day of the week. One would be ready for him to mount at sunrise, a second after the midday meal, while the third would afford one day's rest in three to the stud. Besides his twenty crowns a month, not a calf or a colt is sold on the property without a fee of a crown to the *buttero*; all the ashes of the large fires used for many purposes on the land are his perquisite, and a more valuable one than might be supposed. And sundry other rights, customs, and fees make the *buttero's* position a very fortunate one. But he is well worth his earnings. It is not every man who has such an eye for the points of a horse or a heifer, or such a knowledge of their habits in health and sickness, as is needed to fit him for his business. The well-to-do *buttero* therefore rides his handsome and spirited horse with a somewhat cavalier and slightly aggressive air and bearing in the streets of Rome, and sticks his high steeple-crowned beaver, with its cock's feather in it, jauntily on one side of his head, and sits in the saddle with one hand on the waistband of his closely fitting black leather breeches; while his well-made legs, clad in

leather leggings, made to fit them like his skin, and buckled with a profusion of straps and buckles, hang as only legs more accustomed to the saddle than to walking can hang.

Such was Tancredi Melitta the *buttero*, the present head of a family who had filled the same position from father to son for many generations on the same property; not one of the largest on the Campagna, but one of sufficient extent to make him a very well-to-do man. He was perfectly honest; well-informed as to the things necessary to be known for the satisfactory discharge of his own functions; utterly, nay wonderfully, ignorant of all in the world besides; entirely convinced that what he did know comprised the sum and substance of all human knowledge; and that all who were not acquainted with that were uneducated blockheads, and all who pretended to know any thing else impostors and charlatans.

And such as was Tancredi Melitta the father, and *buttero in presenti*, such was Giovanni, familiarly Nanni Melitta, the son and *buttero in futuro*.

Nanni Melitta was really a very handsome fellow, though there was a dash of barbarism about him—about the carriage of his person, the style of his garments, and the expression of his face—which would not have been observed in a Lombard or a Tuscan of similar social position. Perhaps this did not in any degree militate against his claim to be considered a handsome fellow, as certainly it increased his right to be deemed a picturesque one. The latter point of view was of course an impossible one to the girls before whom he was about to present himself. But it may be safely assumed that had that same flavour of barbarism been absent from his appearance he would have seemed less admirable in their eyes.

It would have been too much, perhaps, to expect that it should have been altogether indifferent to Nanni whether he appeared admirable in the eyes of his handsome cousin Lucia, and of her, perhaps, even more attractive friend, whom he then saw for the first time, or not; but we may be quite sure that little Clelia Braschi, who accompanied him and his father, if consulted on the point, would have been found to hold very strongly the opinion that it ought not to have mattered a fig to Nanni what any girl might think of him save one.

And that one was very well calculated to convert a young fellow to the opinion of the holders of it. Clelia Braschi, the daughter of a *capo-cavallaro*¹ on the *tenuta*, next to that

¹ The superintendent of the horses on a *tenuta*, or estate, under the *buttero*.

under the superintendence of Melitta, was as pretty and bright a little *contadina* as eyes could wish to look on. She was not so tall as either of the other two girls; and had no pretensions to beauty of the same high order as belonged, though in such different styles, to both Lucia and Ninetta. Her bright and laughing black eyes had neither the magnificence of size, and apparently unfathomable pellucid depth, which make such eyes as those of Lucia—impostors as they often are—suggestive of intensity of thought and feeling; nor had they in them the promise of illimitable capacities of emotion and passion, which, with a certain appealing melancholy of gaze, fired the male beholder who ventured to let his own glances rest on the large, slowly-moving blue eyes of Ninetta. And Clelia's attractiveness of features was of a different kind from that of either of the two other girls. Hers was the beauty of a dark brunette, of the sort called *piquante*: a little triangular face with a sharp and finely cut little nose and a pointed chin. She was probably yet more ignorant of all things in the world, save those immediately around her daily life, than either Lucia or Ninetta; yet a judge of such matters would perhaps have expected to find more of native power of intelligence in Clelia than in either of the others. For the rest, though she looked bright and smart in the best holiday array of a *contadina*, her garments were not so fashioned as to set off the graces of her person to such an advantage as those of either of the town-bred girls. Lucia also wore the costume of a peasant; but on her it looked as if it had been made, and as if she wore it as a costume got up and put on for the assumption of a picturesque character; whereas Clelia wore hers as one wears the garb that one has lived in all one's life. Ninetta's dress, on the other hand, though characterised by evident poverty, was coquettishly made and coquettishly worn, after the fashion of the city.

There still remains one person of the group advancing through the crowd to the pier at the foot of which the two girls were standing, to be introduced to the reader. The latter already knows that this was 'Carlo,' for though the slower and less partial narrator has left him till the last, Lucia had at once become conscious of his presence, and had with characteristic frankness left nobody in any doubt as to the relationship existing between herself and her '*damo*.' Any one accustomed to Rome and Roman things and ways would at once have known Carlo Carena's calling and position in life from his habiliments;—for he was too poor a man, by far, to possess a different costume for high days and holidays. Carlo was a sculptor's workman. It was his business to chisel the marble into the *forms* conceived and modelled by the sculptor, whose brain indeed

is the birth-place of the shapes that are to be immortal ; but whose hand, for the most part, has to contend with no more rebellious subject-matter than plastic clay. And it will be perceived at once that, great as is the distance that separates the master artist from the mere carver of tombstone figures, the difference between one of the workmen to whom the task of reducing the marble to the shape desired by the sculptor is entrusted and another of the class may be fully as great. It will also be easily understood that the fate and fortunes of those employed as Carlo Carena was employed, depend largely upon chance. It is one thing to be the slave of the chisel to the artist whose every new work makes an epoch in the artistic history of the time ; and another to do the same office for the dullard, whose most ambitious effort may perhaps succeed in recording the virtues and features of a cotton lord, or a shoddy millionaire. It is also one thing to work in this capacity for a noble-minded and generous-hearted man, and a very different one to perform a similar service for a mean-souled and jealous one.

Whether it was that Carlo Carena was an incapable workman, or an idle and careless one, or whether it was that he had hitherto been an unfortunate one, it was tolerably evident that he was not a prosperous one. He was not wearing absolutely the same dress that he worked in at the marble every day. But it was the same in kind—a light-coloured linen blouse, and trousers of a similar material. The only attempt to turn his simple costume into a holiday suit, consisted of the addition of a scarlet sash, which bound the blouse around the waist, and a flat scarlet cap, the bulging circumference of which spread out in such a way as to form some protection to the eyes and face against the sun, and to render it a by no means unpicturesque covering for the head. But whatever else Carlo had got or had failed to get for himself in the great world-competition for existence, he had gained, and knew very well that he had gained, the whole heart of a girl whose favour half Rome would have been well disposed to dispute with him if disputing could have done any good in the matter. But both Lucia and Carlo knew that, dispute the matter who might, they two meant to belong to each other and to be true to each other for weal or for woe, and to fight the world together. And when Ninetta had answered Lucia's little bit of *espièglerie* with the assurance that she should not have the least fear of introducing her lover, the grand French captain, to her, Lucia might have retorted that she was giving proof that she had no sort of misgiving in bringing her lover and Ninetta together. Not that she was at all insensible to the fact that Ninetta was a remarkably lovely girl, or that it had ever occurred to her to think of measuring her own attractions

against those of her friend. But it never could have come into her head that there was any possibility of Carlo being otherwise than true to her, or of her being otherwise than true to him. Her nature was too simple and straightforward a one for any such doubts. She had never sought to tease her lover with coquetries or jealousies either real or feigned; had told him frankly that she returned his love, when he had confided his to her; and to her thinking there was no more to be said about it—much more to be said of their mutual love—but nothing more as to the recognised fact that he belonged to her, and she to him, for evermore.

Which was the handsomer man, Nanni Melitta or Carlo Carena? It is a difficult question. An artist brought to perform the office of Paris, would have admitted that it was a *very* difficult question. Yet they were as dissimilar as two young men could well be; and probably every girl to whom the question could have been put, would have been at no loss to give a decided reply in one sense or the other. But there would probably have been as many votes one way as the other. Lucia's opinion of course was a very decided one, but ought not to count for anything. Clelia Braschi's little mind too was quite made up on the subject, as soon as ever she saw the young sculptor. But neither can we admit her decision to have any weight in settling the question. Ninetta was free to form an unprejudiced opinion on the subject; and anybody might have betted that she would have given the preference in her mind to the young artist; but the fact was just the reverse. Again, if like be attracted to like, it might have been supposed that Lucia would have been more likely to fall in love with such a man as her cousin Nanni, than with Carena. She had not done so. And though her opinion must now be considered as a foregone conclusion, yet she had known Nanni before she had known Carlo, and might have fallen in love with him—but did not; and *did* fall in love very desperately with the sculptor.

Certainly it was not a case of like to like. There was none of the exuberant vitality, none of the especially Roman characteristic of majestic largeness of development, about Carlo Carena, which so remarkably distinguished Lucia Savelli, and was also strikingly observable in her cousin Nanni Melitta. In one word, the animal nature was less vigorous, the intellectual nature more vigorous, in Carlo than in the others. Not that he was otherwise than a well-grown and handsomely developed young man. But he looked as if Nanni Melitta could have taken him round the waist and squeezed the life out of him easily. He was not an unhealthy looking but a delicately formed man, with a head set on his shoulders with the grace and beauty in the lines of the nape of the neck of an Apollo

Belvidere. The beauty of the head and face too were of a totally different character from those of Nanni, who might have seemed a man of another race. Instead of being ruddy brown, he was delicately pale, and there was about the form of his cheeks and chin a look which, to tell the truth, seemed to speak of insufficient nourishment. But the mouth, eyes, and forehead were eminently handsome; the first sweet with unmistakable gentleness and goodness; the second large, blue, and full of intelligence; the latter truly noble, both large and lofty; very fair, but with the unmistakable stamp of mental power in the outlines and expression of it.

If Lucia had been asked, or if she had ever asked herself—which doubtless she never had—*why* she loved Carlo Carena, she would probably have been much puzzled to find an answer. It certainly was not because he looked so clever. And I am disposed to think that the sweet mouth had more to do with it than the noble forehead or intellectual-looking eyes. Partly, too, I suspect that a certain strain of that feeling, which arises in the breast of a protector towards one protected, mingled in the yarn of Lucia's emotions. It will be seen presently by virtue of what circumstances such a feeling may have been generated. It was in no way derogatory to Carlo's manhood, or to Lucia's maidenhood. But so it was, that fortune had put it in Lucia's power to be eminently useful to Carlo's fortunes.

And now that the reader is in possession of the *carte du pays*, he may be allowed to make further acquaintance with all the members of the party.

CHAPTER III.

CARLO CARENA AND HIS LOVE.

'*BRAVA, figliuola mia!*' said Tancredi Melitta, as he came up to the spot where the girls were standing; 'I said I'd lay a wager you were first at the trysting-place. Carlo here wanted to run round to the house in the Borgo Angelico to see if you were there, and bring you to the Piazza. But I knew better. Let's go straight to the place she told us, I said; for it's a thousand to one she is there before us.'

'You were right this time, uncle. I took care to be early, to make sure of a good place. This is my friend, Ninetta Innocenti, uncle, and cousin Nanni. She works in pearls in the shop of Signor Angelo Lucidi in the Via della Ripetta. Signor Carlo, I present you to my friend la Ninetta Innocenti!' (The last words were said with a laugh in the eyes, and a little mock air of ceremony.) 'How do you do, Clelia? Aren't we in luck to have such a lovely morning for the festa?'

Clelia tried to say something in reply ; but only succeeded in blushing and giggling. For the fact of being in Rome, and in the company of these city ladies, especially of Ninetta, who was a stranger and wore the costume of the *borghesia*, oppressed the little *contadina* with a fit of shyness.

‘I suppose you have seen these fine things before now, *figliuola mia*?’ said Tancredi, addressing himself to Ninetta, and looking at her with evident admiration.

‘*Sissignore!*’ said Ninetta, casting down her eyes beneath the *buttero*’s gaze. ‘I saw the procession last year, but not in such a good place as this. And then—I was all by myself, too; and a holiday taken that way is not worth much, is it, Lucia? This time it is something like a holiday!’

‘I have seen one once before!’ put in Clelia, just beginning to find her tongue, and proud to be able to bring her experience to bear upon the subject in hand; ‘and I remember it quite well. It was the year Santa Dei and Cecco Rossi were married, and *babbo* brought mother and me into Rome to see the procession; but I don’t think it was so fine a one as this,’ added Clelia, feeling it to be good manners towards her companions to assume that the coming show must be superior to all others.

‘Oh, no, of course not,’ said Ninetta; ‘nothing like so grand!’

‘Why, how do you know, Ninetta? I thought it was always the same every year?’ said Lucia, with matter-of-fact simplicity.

‘Not at all the same,’ returned Ninetta; ‘there might be the Holy Father and the Monsignori all the same; but what la Clelia is thinking of is, that a certain *giovinotto* who is here now was not of the party then.’

At this masterpiece of delicate raillery, both Nanni and Clelia blushed furiously, and Nanni to the full as much as Clelia. Had he been an artizan of the city it would have been otherwise; and it was only Clelia who was able to find words to make head against the attack.

‘I am sure that one *giovinotto* more or less does not make much difference. There are always plenty of them, and more than enough, I think.’ This was Nanni’s punishment for not having a word to say for himself, and leaving all the burden of carrying on the defence upon her.

Meanwhile Lucia and Carlo had been saying a few words to each other apart, in a manner that showed that any attempted raillery on *their* relations to each other would have been entirely thrown away.

‘He was here not half an hour before you came,’ said Lucia.

‘Here! What, Signor Chianquinsi here with you?’ returned Carlo.

‘Yes. That is, he spoke to me, seeing me here. He was going into the church to see the *funzioni*. He spoke of you, before I had said a word about you. I told him that I thought he would see you to-morrow,’ said Lucia.

‘No! did you, though? That was a bold stroke. And you did not wait to find out whether I would go to him or no? But you knew very well that I should do what you told me to do, *tesoro mio*,’ returned Carlo, looking fondly into her face.

‘Well, I thought that you would not let so good a chance slip. And then, certainly, I figured to myself that you would not find it disagreeable to be in the same workshop with—somebody that you are very likely to find with il Signor Chianquinsi,’ rejoined Lucia, shyly taking Carlo’s hand in hers, as they stood side by side.

‘*Anima mia!*’ murmured the young man, stooping his head over that of Lucia, till his lips came so near to her forehead that it was almost impossible to him to resist the magnetic force of attraction, while Lucia, perfectly aware somehow or other of what was taking place over her head, though she could not see it, gently moved her head the least bit in the world, and whispered, ‘Take care!’

‘But, darling,’ continued the young sculptor, obeying Lucia’s hint so far as to bring his face down to the level of hers, and keep it at the respectful distance of some six inches, ‘I think—that is, I am afraid, that you don’t quite understand. You are so good, and so single-minded, my own Lucia. Don’t you see, that—’ and Carlo paused as if he had a difficulty in finding the right words to say what he wished to say.

‘See what, Carlo?’ said the girl, looking up into his face with open-eyed and unaffected surprise; ‘surely it would be a good thing for you, if only to get away from that horrid Morel. I don’t know what you mean, indeed I don’t.’

‘No, dearest, I know you don’t; and I hate to have to tell you, you are so good and innocent. But there! Don’t you see that this Signor Americano with the wonderful barbarous name—that he has eyes enough to know that his model is the handsomest girl in Rome—small blame to him for that, for he could not help seeing it—but that he would give his ears to steal a little bit of that love which the model has given the whole of to a poor workman,’ said Carlo, with his eyes on the ground, and not venturing to look into his mistress’s face to see the effect of his words. Had he looked, he would have seen the whole of Lucia’s face and neck covered with a dark crimson blush, which was not one of pleasure, or still less of gratified vanity.

‘Oh, Carlo! you must not say that; and you must not think it. I assure you that you are doing a great injustice to Signor Chianquinsi—believe me, you are. Why, do you think he does not know that we love each other? Do you think I took any pains to prevent him from knowing that?’

‘No, darling, I am sure you did not. You are too good and too pure-minded. But this Americano—all the same for that—they think that money can do anything with poor people, who have so little of it. Tell me now truly—but that I am sure you will if you tell me at all—tell me, do you really believe that he does not very specially admire you? Do not you know that, all the time you are in his studio, he is thinking of you and not of the work he is modelling?’

‘I can tell you this for certain, Carlo—that he never in all his life said a single word, nor half a word, that an honest good girl who loves another man ought not to hear. Besides, do you think that if he meant anything wrong, there would be the least chance of his accepting you as his workman? Would he want to have somebody always at hand who would make his life not worth twenty-four hours’ purchase if he so much as looked at me offensively—would that be his game if he meant what was wrong?’

‘It would be a very losing game, if he did,’ said Carlo, with a dangerous look in his eyes. ‘But, how does he know that? I have seen him look at you, and heard him speak to you; and nothing shall persuade me that he does not—well—that he would not fain *amoreggiare* a little with you. Perhaps he thinks to propitiate you by taking me into his studio.’

‘Well, there never was such an unreasonable fellow as you are. You think that because somehow or other you had the misfortune to fall in love with me, all the other men in the world must do the same.’ And while this was being said a hand stole out from Lucia’s side, under cover of her apron, and found its way into Carlo’s palm, which forthwith closed upon it. ‘But at all events,’ continued Lucia, ‘since one must humour you gentlemen by looking at a matter from your own point of view, supposing Signor Chianquinsi to have any such notions in his head as you suspect, would it not be best for me to have some one willing and able to take care of me? I think I see Signor Chianquinsi, or any other Inglese or Americano, saying a word more than is civil to me when you are there! *Altro che* four-and-twenty hours! Four-and-twenty seconds would be nearer the reckoning. Don’t you see, Carlo, that the more you suspect him of meaning wrong, the more you ought to try to get a footing in his studio?’ argued Lucia, mixing her reasoning with flattery, according to the never-failing receipt of her sex.

'Any way it comes in the end to what I started from in the beginning, *anima mia*, that I shall have to do whatever you choose that I should do. So you have settled that I am to go to this Americano to-morrow? And how do we know that he will have me, even if I make up my mind to work for him?'

'My opinion is that he will,' said Lucia with a kind of tone that seemed to her lover's sensitive ear to imply a consciousness that she had a power in the matter, which brought a sudden flush and frown to his brow. But he chased the feeling from him, with a touch of anger against himself, caused by his perfect conviction that the idea in his mind was an unworthy one, and did wrong to his Lucia and her true-hearted affection.

'First,' continued Lucia, 'because I think he is artist enough to know that he will be securing a first-rate workman; and secondly because he has quarrelled with the man he has at present. And then,' continued she, hurrying on to another argument, which in truth made the main motive of her own desire for the arrangement in question, 'won't it be a great thing for you, *mio povero Carlo*, to be quit of that spiteful, mean, jealous animal of a Frenchman, Morel? Won't you be glad to tell him he may look for another hand to put his *sciocchezze* into marble? Won't you now, *tesoro mio*?'

'You dearest and best of darlings!' said Carlo, the tears of tenderness gathering in his eyes as he gazed on her, 'yes, it will be a glad day when I can do that. How well you know me, my Lucia! Well, then, it is settled that I am to come to the Chianquinsi studio to-morrow. But I am horribly jealous of the Americano all the same, you know. What o'clock had I better come?'

'There never was anybody that talked such nonsense as you do, Carlo. But, like other people, you will find out your mistake in time, that's one comfort. Oh! you can't be too early for Signor Chianquinsi. He comes to his studio soon after it's daylight. Come at six o'clock; then there will be time to settle everything, ready for you to tell Signor Morel, when he comes to his studio, that you don't mean to do another stroke of the chisel for him.'

'Yes, I shan't be sorry to be able to tell him that, I confess. And that will be all owing to my Lucia. Well, I will be in the Via Margutta by six to-morrow morning. And now, *tesoro mio*, tell me something about yourself. How go matters in the Borgo Angelico?'

'Ah! don't ask me, Carlo; there is nothing pleasant to tell, and no good to be got out of talking about it,' said Lucia, while a change came over not her face only, but, as one might have almost fancied, over her whole person; so great was the contrast between

the elastic springy firmness that seemed to belong to the girl, and to be the natural characteristic of her vigorous organization, as long as she had been talking about Carlo's interests, and the sort of limp depressed helplessness, that became the expression of it when her own home affairs were alluded to. The words came from her so reluctantly, and she was so desirous of escaping from the subject as quickly as possible—not because there was anything to conceal from Carlo, for all there was to be told had been talked over between them often enough—but simply because it was, as she said, both painful and useless to speak of it; that it will perhaps be best to tell shortly in our own words how matters stood with Lucia in the home in the Borgo Angelico.

(To be continued.)

A Portrait.

RED apples in a sleepy orchard,
Whose trees have branches gnarled and tortured
By slow west winds that never cease;
Warm cocks of corn, well-capped and steady,
For moss-hung garners brown and ready,
Tall tokens of the year's increase;
Green lily-leaves whose parent-river
September winds forget to quiver
In shallow silver pools of peace.

An autumn face, half grey, half rosy,
And fluttering, like an autumn posy,
With hueless strips of fading hair;
A firm, sweet mouth whose utmost bliss is
To drink the light of children's kisses,
Half dreaming of the years that were;
Soft looks that melt all eyes that meet her
To something purer, something sweeter,
So kind they are and debonair.

A life whose silent day has wasted,
And left undreamed of and untasted
The fruits of all extreme desire;
A matron-life whose seemly fashion
No frantic hopes, no scathing passion
Has worn with tears or seamed with fire;
A life so calm that when it passes
Its fame must be as breath on glass is,
And in a stainless mist expire.

EDMUND W. GOSSE,

Juliet.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

CHAPTER XXII.

FACE TO FACE.

THE fine morning, as Colonel Fleming had said to himself, had tempted him out from his hotel for a turn in the Park. Possibly there was some other reason as well that attracted him there; for, once among the gay crowd along the footpath by the side of the ride, he looked eagerly about him for one face which he longed to see again. Presently he took a chair, for he was not very strong or well in those days, and sat still to watch the crowd go by.

He saw her not. With a great relief, and yet with a strange pang of disappointment too, he caught sight of Lord George Mannersley's handsome face, and saw that the lady with him was not Juliet Travers. Then he looked for her among the riders; but, though many fair dames and maidens on their sleek well-kept horses passed him, the woman he sought was not among them. With a sigh he rose and turned his back upon the crowd. Someone, a little dried-up old gentleman who had been leaning forward over the railings, flew after him and intercepted his retreat.

'My dear Colonel Fleming!' cried the little man, shaking both his hands in eager greeting,—'when did you come home? I am so delighted to meet you; it is indeed pleasant to see an old friend again. You don't remember me, eh?—I don't think you quite remember me?'

'Yes, indeed I do—it is General Chutney,' said Hugh, and he responded to the little man's greetings very cordially.

'When did you come home? Leave, I suppose?'

'Sick leave, I am sorry to say. I have had a baddish bout of fever; but I hope a few months at home may set me to rights.'

'Ah, that's bad. You know, after that fever at Futteyghur—I dare say you remember how bad I was, and Mrs. Chutney quite knocked herself up——'

'Yes, yes, I recollect it very well,' said Hugh quickly, in dread of one of the little general's long-winded stories. 'By the way, how is Mrs. Chutney?'

'Thank you, she is well, my dear sir—in *health*, I may say, quite well;' with rather a dubious emphasis, as if to say that there

were some points in which Mrs. Chutney could not be said to be well. 'Perhaps, colonel, you will look in upon her; she would be very pleased, you know; and if you would drop in and take pot-luck some day at dinner-time—just as you are, you know—we should both be very glad to see you and talk over old days.'

'Thanks very much,' said Hugh, as he prepared to make his escape from his garrulous and hospitable friend; 'I will certainly do myself the honour of calling upon Mrs. Chutney some day soon.' And then he went his way, smiling to himself as he remembered how he had been inveigled into that visit to the far recesses of westernmost Notting Hill on a previous occasion.

It seemed only yesterday that General Chutney had met him in the East India Club when he had come up from Sotherne, and coaxed him in almost the same words to call upon his wife.

But when Major-General Chutney had gone home and imparted to the wife of his bosom the details of that same 'pot-luck' invitation, great was the wrath and indignation of that portly matron. For what housewife, even the most talented, can abide that dreadful 'dropping-in' system, which men think so very simple a proceeding!

'As if I could ask Colonel Fleming to sit down to hashed mutton or curried rabbit!' exclaimed Mrs. Chutney indignantly, when her lord faintly remarked that he had meant it for the best, and that he was sure that Colonel Fleming would be quite satisfied with a mutton-chop. 'Mutton-fiddlestick!' cried the lady, with a toss of her head; 'who ever heard of such rubbish! No, of course, as you have been so foolish and improvident, I must keep myself prepared every day till he comes with a suitable dinner—only don't complain, general, if the bills are high—it will be entirely your own fault, remember, if they are!'

So for the next fortnight the little general fared sumptuously every day, greatly to his own satisfaction, but the expected guest never made his appearance.

Meanwhile Hugh Fleming had made his way across the unfrequented corner of the Park—struck into Great Stanhope Street, and sauntered slowly up South Audley Street—and here it was that at a corner very suddenly he came face to face with Juliet Travers.

They both stopped short, Juliet with a little exclamation of surprise; and then she recovered herself the first, as women generally do—and held out her hand.

'Colonel Fleming! this is indeed a surprise. I thought you were in India: how long have you been home?'

The forced coldness of her voice, and her manner, and her commonplace words galled him beyond expression. Hugh Fleming

was not a man to make an uncalled-for display of feeling; he answered her in the same tone—

‘I came home only last week. Which way are you walking, Mrs. Travers? Pray allow me to accompany you. I hope Cis is well?’

‘Quite well, thanks; he will be very pleased to see you again.’

And then a somewhat awkward silence fell upon them both.

Juliet reached the shop to which she was bound, went in and made her purchase, Colonel Fleming standing beside her and holding her parasol whilst she did so; and then they turned back together in the direction of Grosvenor Street.

Juliet was somewhat pale, her lips were set hard together, and her eyes never strayed to her companion’s face. A cold, stubborn pride was in her heart. All the yearning, all the longing for his presence, which she had felt when she believed him on the other side of the world, had gone out of her, and had left only an angry indignation towards him. This was the man, she said fiercely to herself, to whom she had once humbled her pride to make an offer of herself and her love, and who had rejected and scorned her, and then left her with a cruel heartless silence to her fate!

‘You live almost entirely in Grosvenor Street now, I hear from Mr. Bruce?’ said Colonel Fleming, breaking the silence.

‘Yes, almost entirely.’

‘You don’t often go down to dear old Sotherne?’ he asked.

‘Very seldom. I am not very fond of Sotherne.’

‘Indeed? You used to be very fond of it.’

And Juliet answered hurriedly, ‘I am never well there—the air is too keen for me;’ and in order to change the subject she added, ‘Are you home for long, Colonel Fleming?’

‘I hardly know; it depends very much upon my health. I am home on sick leave.’

And then Juliet looked up at him with a sudden pang.

‘You are ill!’ she exclaimed falteringly, and for the first time he heard her voice with its natural ring. ‘How selfish of me not to have asked you before! Yes, you look ill. What is the matter? have you had good advice?’

‘It is nothing now,’ he answered, smiling at her with one of his old, half-tender smiles. ‘I have had a bad fever, but I am much better; I dare say a few months at home will set me up again completely.’

They had reached Grosvenor Street by this time.

‘You will come in and have some lunch, and see Cis, won’t you, Colonel Fleming?’ said Juliet, as she stopped at her own door.

Hugh Fleming stood for a moment half uncertain—he looked away down the street and then back again into the beautiful face

he had loved so long and so often yearned to see, and could find no good reason why he should not go into her house, and a great many reasons why he should. He was on the point of accepting her invitation, when a slight noise in the balcony above caused him to glance up. Lord George Mannersley had pushed aside the muslin draperies of the open window, and stepped out for a minute among the geranium- and fuschia-pots to look down upon them.

Lord George Mannersley was evidently at home in Mrs. Travers's drawing-room; he had probably an appointment to see her, and was waiting for her to come in. Colonel Fleming did not know that Mrs. Dalmaine was also ensconced upstairs.

He lifted his hat very coolly to Mrs. Travers. 'Thank you, not to-day, I think; I shall hope to call upon you some day soon, when I may possibly be fortunate enough to find you disengaged;' and with a slight bow, he left her.

Juliet, who had noted his upward glance, went into the house with a smile that was almost triumphant upon her face.

There is not a woman born, I believe, who can resist the temptation of making the man she loves jealous. It is a dangerous game, but women have this much, if no more, in common with 'fools,' that they 'delight in playing with edged tools.' The man may adore her, be devoted to her, spend his life in her service, and she may know it perfectly—but if she can make him jealous, she will do it. Her power over him seems to her to be incomplete unless she can cause him some amount of pain; that he should be angry and hurt and sore seems to her a stronger proof of his love than all his devotion and kindness; she acts her little part, and lays her little traps, and the man falls into them for the most part over and over again, with a blindness and an unsuspectingness that are absolutely astonishing.

As Juliet went upstairs, she said to herself: 'So! he is jealous!—very well, I can easily work that a little more!—and surely, if he is jealous already, he *must* care a little for me still!'

'Whom on earth were you talking to, Mrs. Travers?'

'An old friend, Lord George,' she answered, somewhat shortly, 'who has just come home from India, and whom I was trying to persuade to come into lunch. Did you find it very hot out, Rosa?'

'Suffocating!—and such a crowd! But who is your "old friend," Juliet?'

'Colonel Fleming—he was my guardian,' she answered coldly, taking off her bonnet.

'A guardian!' cried Mrs. Dalmaine; 'how alarming, and how dull! and I who detest the whole race of parents and guardians, grandfathers and grandmothers, uncles and aunts, unless they die

and leave me their money; then I can bless their memories with tears in my eyes and wear decent mourning for them—decidedly I am very glad your old gentleman did not accept your invitation to lunch, Juliet! What a providential escape we have had!’

‘I don’t think you would have called this guardian an “old gentleman” if you had peeped at him from behind the blinds as I did,’ said Lord George, who was taking Juliet’s gloves and parasol from her hand; ‘he seemed to me a very good-looking fellow—more of the cousin genus—eh, Mrs. Travers?’

‘What rubbish you are both talking!’ cried Juliet, impatiently—the idle chatter jarring strangely upon her. ‘Do let us come down to luncheon—I am starving; and do find something more amusing to talk about! Whom did you see this morning?’

They sat down to luncheon—and the usual gossip and scandal became the theme of the conversation. Presently Cis sauntered in silent and moody, and ate his luncheon almost without speaking—although Mrs. Dalmaine, who took a pleasure in tormenting the ‘young bear,’ as she called him behind his back, made a point of addressing a great many questions and observations very politely to him, which Cis, who always suspected her of laughing at him, answered with surly monosyllables.

‘What do you know about this pianiste whom Juliet has engaged for the twenty-sixth?’ she persisted in asking him—having discovered, by heaven knows what arts, that the subject was a singularly distasteful one to Cis.

‘I have heard her play—she plays well; there is nothing else to know about her, I suppose,’ answered the master of the house somewhat savagely, for it was not the first time that his unlucky recommendation of Gretchen had drawn upon him the somewhat close questionings of his wife’s friend.

‘Well, you know, Mr. Travers,’ continued the lady, ‘as I was saying to Juliet, we really never have done your musical taste justice. I always thought, you know—you mustn’t be offended—that you were one of those matter-of-fact, soulless people, on whom music has no effect whatever—who could not tell the March in Faust from the Old Hundredth Psalm, for instance; and do you know, it is a delightful surprise to me to discover that you really can understand and appreciate musical talent—that there is *some* music that affects you. “Music hath charms,” you know, “to soothe the savage breast,”’—this last with a delicate intonation of fine-lady impertinence which Juliet, who was talking to Lord George, did not hear.

‘I don’t know what you are talking about,’ said Cis, who knew he was being laughed at, and resented it, but had not wit enough

to answer his opponent in her own weapons; 'I don't know anything about music, and I hate it!' digging savagely into the cheese as he spoke.

'In-deed!' exclaimed the fair Rosa, uplifting her eyebrows with well-affected astonishment. 'Then really, Mr. Travers, *may* I ask—allow me to ask *what* it is that makes you recommend Mdle. Rudenbach so *very* highly?'

'How should I know? I haven't recommended her particularly. Juliet wanted a player, and I told her the name of one. Where is the occasion to make all these mysteries about it, Mrs. Dalmaine?'

'No mystery?' continued his tormentor playfully. 'Oh, then I *know* she is pretty! and you knew her before you married! Oh, fie! fie! you naughty man!' reproachfully shaking a finger at him.

'Nothing of the sort,' stammered Cis; and then got so red, that Mrs. Dalmaine at once perceived that she had gone unconsciously very near the truth; and the idea tickled her so much that she burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

'What are you two making such a noise about?' said Juliet, looking up from her talk with Lord George at the other end of the table.

'Oh, nothing, dearest Juliet!' cried Mrs. Dalmaine, still in convulsions of laughter; 'only—my dear—your husband is quite—the most amusing man—I ever met in my life!'

At which piece of information Juliet looked profoundly astonished, and Cis proportionately irate.

After lunch, when Lord George had taken his departure, and Mrs. Dalmaine was established in her friend's barouche—for, having no carriage of her own, she generally managed to be taken out in Juliet's—the little woman observed to her friend, as they rolled luxuriously down Piccadilly,

'That quiet husband of yours is rather sweet upon the piano-player, my dear Juliet!'

No woman, however little she may care for her husband, likes to have that kind of thing said to her. Juliet felt very angry. 'I think you presume upon your friendship with me, Rosa!' she cried indignantly, flushing up.

'Don't fly out, Juliet. I always say what I think, and it is only meant as a hint to you. Bless you, my dear, we all have to come to it! Why, my old man has been dancing attendance on Lady Featherbrain any time the last eight years, and it doesn't lie very heavy on my heart, does it?'

'I don't think you have any right to say such things about Cis,' persisted Juliet angrily—'especially to his wife.'

'Very well, dear; I won't say it again,' answered Mrs. Dalmaine,

with perfect good humour. 'Only, if it gives you any amusement to watch, you will probably find it out for yourself. Let us change the subject, as it is one you don't seem to like, and do tell me what to wear at your party: will my blue and chocolate do, or must I have a new dress?' And thus the first seeds were sown of a great deal of mischief, which afterwards grew up and flourished.

During the remainder of the week Juliet watched anxiously and feverishly for Colonel Fleming's promised call. She had mentioned his return, as in duty bound, to Cis, upon whom the fact had not seemed to make much impression, and who had merely observed that she had better ask him to dinner.

Juliet, who could hardly mention Hugh's name without a beating heart and a painful sensation of self-consciousness, could not understand how it was that Cis had never guessed her secret in the faintest degree, although he must have known from her words to him when they were first engaged that someone had already possessed her affections.

But Cis Travers had no great acuteness of perception, and his sensitiveness was too keenly awake to his own feelings and thoughts to be very much alive to those of another, even though that other might be his wife. He was vaguely and somewhat peevishly jealous of such men as Lord George Mannersley, who hung about and engrossed the attention of his beautiful wife; but when, with changing colour and averted eyes, she spoke to him of Hugh Fleming, he failed to read the signs of real danger in her face, and only thought that the guardian's return was rather a bore to himself, as he remembered to have stood somewhat in awe of the man whose mind and breeding and knowledge of the world were so infinitely superior to his own.

'Come home, has he? Oh, well, you must ask him to dinner or something, I suppose,' he had said carelessly; and Juliet, who on this topic alone felt almost humble with her husband, knowing how much her heart wronged him every hour that she lived, had been thankful to escape so easily, and to have said all that conscience demanded of her upon the subject.

When Colonel Fleming did call in Grosvenor Street, he came at an unfortunate moment.

The room was full of people—Lady Caroline Skinflint, who was a great chatterbox, was taking up all Juliet's attention with a vivid description of how one great lady had turned her back publicly upon another before everybody at Lady Somebody's ball, and how she, Lady Caroline, had seen the whole thing from beginning to end; and in the middle of the story Colonel Fleming was announced.

Lady Caroline put up her eye-glass for a moment at the new-comer with well-bred curiosity, and then seeing that he was a stranger, and that she did not know him, she dropped it again, and went on with her story with fresh animation.

There were two other ladies present, old Sotherne neighbours, whom Mrs. Dalmaine, leaning languidly back in her chair, had been endeavouring to entertain with vapid remarks on the weather and the Academy, whilst with one ear she was listening with all her might to catch some fragments of Lady Caroline's spicy story. These two country ladies were none other than our old friends Mrs. Rollick and her daughter Eleanor. Miss Arabella had long ago been taken to bless a good man's humble store—a very humble store, derived from his captain's pay in a line regiment.

Good Mrs. Rollick, who began to find that, with Juliet entirely engrossed with her fashionable acquaintance, and Mrs. Dalmaine vouchsafing only a few inattentive remarks, her visit to Mrs. Travers was a very uncomfortable one, hailed Colonel Fleming's entrance with positive delight.

She shook hands with him with effusion, and although for the first moment Colonel Fleming hardly recollected her, she soon recalled herself to his memory.

'You don't remember me, Colonel Fleming—Mrs. Rollick, you know—and my daughter Eleanor—the *only* Miss Rollick now. My dear Arabella is Mrs. Wilson now, and has such a dear little baby boy. And how long have you been home, Colonel Fleming? How pleasant it is to meet an old friend so unexpectedly! Yes, we still live down in the old country, but Eleanor and I come up for a few weeks in June, just to see the world and the picture-galleries, you know—for, as my daughter Mrs. Wilson says—' and here Mrs. Rollick went off into sundry quotations from the sayings and doings of 'my daughter Mrs. Wilson,' who, in virtue of her matrimonial dignities and the existence of the juvenile Wilson aforesaid, was evidently a great authority, and an unfailing cause of pride and glorification to her fond mother.

Meanwhile more visitors came in, and Lady Caroline took her leave; and Mrs. Dalmaine, having affectionately escorted her ladyship—to whose dinner-parties she coveted an *entrée*—to the door, came back and took a chair near Mrs. Rollick, with a wonderfully quickened interest in that good lady's somewhat uninteresting chatter.

'I can't leave that nice-looking man to the tender mercies of that fussy old woman,' she said to herself. 'By the way, he doesn't look much like one's idea of a guardian. How sly of Juliet to talk of him as if he were an old man!' Whereupon that astute ob-

server of human nature decided that she would keep her eyes open, and observe carefully the proceedings of this same slight soldierly-looking guardian, whom her own imagination, far more than anything Juliet had said, had pictured as something wholly different from what he was.

Mrs. Dalmaine thought she would try a little fascination upon him herself, but was surprised to find that Colonel Fleming seemed infinitely to prefer to her own sweetest smiles and glances, Mrs. Rollick's commonplace accounts of all the changes and chances that had altered the neighbourhood of Sotherne, interspersed with anecdotes and remarks relative to 'my daughter Mrs. Wilson.'

Presently, seeing it to be hopeless to wait till all her visitors had gone, Colonel Fleming got up and took his leave of Juliet, who had not had one single word of conversation with him, and who could only manage hurriedly to engage him to dinner as she shook hands with him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MUSICAL PARTY.

'THE plot thickens!' said Mrs. Dalmaine to herself, as she peered out from under the shade of her coquettish little white parasol at sundry events which were passing in front of her nose.

'Hum! there goes number one in a rage!' as Lord George Mannersley, with a very ill-tempered face, strode quickly past her, stumbling over her dress as he did so. 'He needn't tread on my toes, though! What a fool Juliet is to throw him over! he's a much more creditable man than the other—younger, and more the fashion. Number two is not bad, either. I wonder if he is an old love—and yet she does not seem to care about him, either; she is looking as cross as poison at him now. I can't make her out at all!'

Neither could Colonel Fleming make her out. He was standing by the side of her pony carriage, where she had drawn it up in the shade at the side of the Row. She was leaning back, not looking at him, but playing idly with her whip.

A fortnight had gone by since Colonel Fleming and Juliet Travers had met each other in the street—a fortnight, during which, from standing a little aloof from her at first, he had gradually become more and more attracted to her presence, until now he saw her daily.

It was in order to protect her against the attentions of that good-for-nothing young lord that he haunted her side, he had said to himself at first. Poor child! she was so surrounded with

frivolous and unprofitable friends, her position and her beauty so exposed her to the envious voices of slander, and her husband was so utterly unable to shield her, or to guard her fair name; it would be cowardly indeed if an old friend like himself, who, from his old relations with her, was indeed the first of those who were bound to take care of her, were to stand aloof from her, and to leave her to her fate.

All this, and much more in the same strain, he had at first argued to himself. But by degrees these flimsy excuses faded away even from his own mind, and he began to know that it was for his own sake more than for hers, for the hungering and thirsting for one of the old looks in her dark eyes, for the yearning and longing that he had to know if indeed he were wholly wiped out of her heart—for the craving for some of the old love which she had once brought and laid at his feet—for all this, and for nothing less, that he hovered more and more about her—that he could not keep away from her. For Juliet Travers was not to him what Juliet Blair had been. She was cold and distant to him, often bitterly sarcastic. Sometimes, even, when some chance word seemed to soften her for a moment towards him, a something, some harsh thought, some angry recollection, seemed to sweep suddenly across her, and place a barrier at once between them.

He could not in any manner get back to the easy familiarity, the pleasant confidence, the playful friendliness which had distinguished all their intercourse in the old days. There seemed always a wall as it were between them, whenever he made the slightest attempt to overstep the most ordinary commonplaces of conversation.

There was something about her which puzzled him. He could not make her out!

So he stood talking to her, and Juliet, not looking at him, listened—listened not so much to what he was saying as to the sound of his voice—listened with a secret happiness and joy which no one would have guessed at from her perfectly impassive and somewhat absent face.

‘You are more altered in five years than I could have believed possible,’ he had ventured to say to her, as he watched her beautiful but listless face.

‘Possibly—I have had a good deal to alter me—’ she answered dreamily.

‘You would be very angry, I suppose, were I tell you what, if I had not known you so well, I should now imagine to be your character?’

‘Well, I will try not to be so very angry,’ said Juliet, with a

half laugh; 'essays on one's character are sometimes rather amusing. What—if you did not know me so well, as you say—what, then, would you think of me, Colonel Fleming?'

'I should think from your manner that you were a woman who had absolutely no heart.'

'How delightful!' she answered scoffingly. 'A woman, or indeed a man, without a heart, is more to be envied than a millionaire. You are quite right, Colonel Fleming; I have no heart—I am too worldly; and I never yet heard of anyone being the happier for the possession of that inconvenient organ. Pray, let us talk of something more lively. Are you coming to my musical crush to-night?'

'Certainly—but remember, Mrs. Travers, that I did not say you had no heart, only that you have that sort of reckless manner that looks as if you wished to be thought heartless. I am such an old friend, that you must forgive my saying these things to you.'

'Oh, say anything you like,' she exclaimed impatiently; 'I have long ago ceased to care what people say of me. But you must excuse me for leaving you; it is too hot for moral dissection—I literally have not the strength for anything so exhausting—it is nearly two o'clock, and here comes Mrs. Dalmaine to be driven back to lunch. Good-bye, Colonel Fleming. I shall hope to see you this evening!' And as Mrs. Dalmaine took her place in the carriage by her side, Juliet nodded pleasantly to him, touched her ponies, and drove off.

He turned away from her with a sigh. Utterly shallow and worldly and frivolous, what was there left of the woman whom he had loved? And yet—strange contradiction!—Hugh Fleming loved her better than ever!—he felt so sure that she was but acting a part, that she was not showing him her real self, that her heart had become a locked casket, of which he alone held the key.

Had he seen her happy in her husband and in her home, Hugh Fleming would have said to himself 'Thank God!' and have resolutely turned his back upon her. But she was not happy—it needed no wonderful powers of divination to perceive that Juliet Travers was by no means a happy woman.

Her husband had no influence, no control over her, no power to claim either her affection or her respect. And yet this was the husband whom Colonel Fleming had himself recommended to her, whom it had once seemed his duty and his honour to urge her to accept. Most fatal error!

He saw her unhappy, hardened, striving to smother her better feelings in a whirl of dissipation, and amongst the most frivolous and unworthy companions—he saw her thus in her daily

life, in which her husband had sunk into a peevish nonentity, for whom she hardly kept up a pretence of affection—and for all this Hugh Fleming justly felt himself to be in a measure answerable!

And then, he loved her—loved her as he had never loved even that pale bride who had died on her wedding morning! The sweet, pure first love, blamelessly perfect, innocently holy, who was still as a saint and a religion to him, had yet less hold upon his heart than this woman, with all her strong passions and glaring faults, with her proud rebellious heart, and all her very human imperfections.

Strange contradiction! that we love most what is the least worthy of love—that the very faults in some people attract us more than the virtues in others!

That evening, Mrs. Travers's drawing-rooms were crammed and crowded with the best and most select of London society.

And not only were the drawing-rooms crowded, but out into the landing and down the staircase into the hall struggled the well-dressed throng—treading on each other's dresses and toes, thumping their elbows into each other's chests, crushing, crowding, fighting their way up inch by inch, with much the same doggedness, and very much the same manners minus the oaths, as the commoner crowd of their fellow-creatures, who, draggled and shabby, hustle together on the sloppy pavement on Lord Mayor's day, or crush in nightly at the pit-doors of the theatres.

'What a crush!' 'We shall never get into the room!' 'I wish people would not push so!' with a savage look behind her. 'Really, Madam, it is not my fault!' answers the very fat man who is glared at, and who is perspiring freely and mopping his bald head with his handkerchief. 'Fancy calling this pleasure!' 'Mamma, I feel sure I shall faint!' 'Don't be a goose, Ellen; take hold of my arm—we are nearly up.' Such are some of the exclamations to be heard from the strugglers on the staircase.

On the landing stands Juliet in her diamonds, shaking hands mechanically with everyone who comes up, whilst intimate friends whisper as they pass her, 'Dear Mrs. Travers, what a success your parties always are!—*everybody* here!' And then push on into the rooms to remark audibly to a friend, 'Perfectly awful, my dear! People should not be allowed to crush up their friends in this way, with the thermometer at boiling point; and half my dress is torn off my back, I assure you!'

A well-known tenor singer has just finished 'Il Balen' amid a murmur of well-regulated applause from those immediately around the piano, for the crowd is so dense that in the second room no one has been able to hear a note.

Someone whispers the name of the young pianiste, as Gretchen stands up for a moment beside the piano.

There is a certain affectation in the high grey dress in which she invariably appears in public, only that nowadays the old merino has been replaced by the richest corded silk; there are Gloire de Dijon roses in her hair and in the white muslin fichu that is folded over her bosom, and she carries more roses in her hand—roses about which perhaps the master of the house knows more than anyone else.

Gretchen looks rather nervous as she stands pulling off her gloves; she is not generally nervous, but the sight of Cecil Travers's wife in all her blaze of satin and diamonds, the consciousness that it is in *her* house that she is to play, has made her heart flutter ever since she came in. Just before she begins she looks down the room, and through the sea of faces catches sight of Cecil's; a half smile passes rapidly between them, and then Gretchen sits down, strikes her first chord, and forgets to be nervous.

There are not many performers on the pianoforte who have the art of silencing a mixed chattering audience after the fashion that Gretchen Rudenbach had.

When a player sits down to the piano, it is generally the signal for conversation to wax fast and furious; many a *soi-disant* lover of music, who would think it a sin to speak above a whisper during the feeblest warbling of the weakest of Claribel's weak ballads, will nevertheless consider himself quite entitled to discuss his politics or his horses in a somewhat louder tone than usual if the music that is being performed, however good, is 'only playing.'

During the first dozen bars that Gretchen played, no one listened, and everyone talked; and then one said 'Hush!' and another said 'Hush!' and the sound of talking became fainter and fainter, till at last one old gentleman was left declaiming alone about South American stocks and his own bad fortune therein, a communication which was meant to be a confidential 'aside' to his neighbour, but which, owing to the sudden cessation of the buzz of voices around him, came out, to his own amazement, at the very top of his voice.

There was a suppressed titter, and then his wife, who was young and musical, made a rush at him, and he subsided, very much ashamed of himself, into a corner.

After that you could have heard a pin drop among all that breathless, silent audience.

Gretchen played without music—and almost without knowing what she was going to play—a strange, weird mixture of Beethoven, and Schubert, and Bach, and a dozen other great composers, whose

works were all familiar to her from her childhood, and which she blended one into the other with a completeness and harmony that of itself bespoke her real genius.

And the girl's face as she played was not the least part of the attraction of her performance.

Her wide-open blue eyes, with fixed gaze, seeing nothing of what was before them, but wrapt in visions conjured up by her own sweet music; her whole face absorbed, entranced, beautified, by a devotion to her art which amounted to a positive passion,—it was no wonder that every eye was turned admiringly towards her, and every ear enraptured by the pathetic, soul-stirring harmonies which her slight fingers had power to draw from the keys of the instrument.

Standing in the farther corner of the room, half-concealed by the draperies of the window-curtains, was a small, middle-aged little lady in a very unpretentious mauve-silk dress, and with an eyeglass up to her eye.

There was nothing remarkable about this little lady in any way. She had a kindly, but neither clever nor striking countenance, pleasant brown eyes, and smooth dark hair, already flecked with grey, drawn back under a neat but somewhat dowdy lace cap, whilst the whole of her attire was thoroughly unfashionable and countrified.

When Gretchen Rudenbach's playing came to an end, amid a tempest of applause, this unobtrusive little lady put down her eyeglass, and, turning to her next neighbour, who happened to be our good friend Mrs. Rollick, said:

'It is singular how certain I feel of having seen that young lady before.'

'Isn't her playing lovely?' cried Mrs. Rollick enthusiastically. 'I never was so delighted in my life! Just that little bit of Chopin was so lovely, wasn't it?—and my daughter Mrs. Wilson plays it quite as well, I assure you; doesn't she, Eleanor? It is wonderful what a touch Mdlle. Rudenbach has, and such expression and feeling; and then, as my daughter Mrs. Wilson says—'

'I wonder where I can have seen her?' says her companion again, interrupting the course of Mrs. Rollick's maternal admiration.

At this moment Juliet, moving slowly through her crowd of guests, came up to her country friends. 'Have you been pleased, dear Mrs. Dawson?' she says, pressing the hand of her old friend kindly.

'Delighted, my dear. But it is so curious that I feel sure I have seen that girl before, and I cannot remember where.'

‘Probably you have heard her play at some concert; she goes about a good deal, I believe.’

‘No! I have never heard her play; it is not her playing, it is her face I remember so well: those large blue eyes, and that sort of fixed look—it is perfectly familiar to me. I feel sure that it was at home, not in London at all!’

‘At home at Sotherne!’ repeated Juliet in astonishment. ‘Can she be a Sotherne girl? Dear Mrs. Dawson, surely you are mistaken?’

And then all at once Mrs. Dawson remembered; remembered Juliet’s wedding morning, and the strange girl who had come by the early train and crouched down behind the pillar of the church, with her white scared face, and her big, wide-opened eyes, and her look of misery as the bride and bridegroom passed out.

Remembering this, Mrs. Dawson remembered also her own commentaries on the event, and what she had thought this poor girl to be.

‘O yes, I remember now,’ she said, and stammered and got rather red as she said it.

But Juliet wanted to know; her curiosity was excited.

‘Well, where was it, Mrs. Dawson?’ she persisted. ‘Surely not at Sotherne?’

Mrs. Dawson was an honest little woman; it flashed through her mind quickly that she had no right to point out the possibility of evil, and that to hesitate or to turn away the question would be but to arouse Juliet’s suspicions, and to make her think she was hiding something of importance from her; so she determined upon speaking the truth:

‘Why, my dear, it was in the church at your wedding.’

‘At my wedding!’ repeated Juliet in amazement, whilst a quick blush reddened her face for an instant.

‘Yes! it was in the church. No! of course she was not a Sotherne girl, only a stranger come in from curiosity; I noticed her when I went in first to arrange the flowers, and her face made an impression upon me, that is all. It is curious I should have recognised her again.’

‘Are you quite sure it is the same girl?’ asked Juliet earnestly, in a low voice.

‘Yes, quite. It is rather odd, isn’t it? Perhaps she was giving music lessons in the neighbourhood. It is singular I should see her here again.’

‘Very singular,’ repeated Juliet mechanically.

Just then Mrs. Dalmaine passed by, and whispered in her ear:

‘Do look at that wicked young husband of yours, my dear,

flirting with Mdlle. Rudenbach; didn't I tell you he was sweet upon her? and no wonder, I am sure, for she plays like an angel. I should say there is no wild beast nor husband she could not tame if she chose.'

And Mrs. Dalmaine passed on with a laugh. Juliet turned with a start, and looking towards the piano saw, in fact, Cecil bending over Gretchen and talking to her in an animated way quite unusual to him. He was touching the flowers in her hand, and from his expression, and the smile on the girl's face, Juliet felt convinced that they were her husband's gift.

A light seemed to break in upon her all at once; the meaning of many things in Cecil's conduct became plain to her. With a sudden indignation it struck her that he must have known this woman before his marriage, and that the whole of his early affection for her was but a sham and a delusion; and, alas! a motive for such a sham was easily supplied by her own wealth. That even on her wedding-day, and during the utterance of his marriage vows, this girl should have been actually present, was a shock to her pride and her self-respect which Juliet could not but feel acutely.

She turned round to Mrs. Dawson, and said rather coldly:

'One sees such strange likenesses occasionally; but I feel sure you must be mistaken, Mrs. Dawson. Have you had an ice yet? Will you not go down and get one?' And then she moved on, and coming face to face with Hugh Fleming among the crowd, she could not even smile at him.

'They are all false to me,' she said to herself, very bitterly. 'The man I have married has never loved me at all, and the man I loved cared for me so little that he deserted me!'

And as she passed among her guests, smiling, flattered, and envied, the beautiful Mrs. Travers felt that her life was scarcely worth having, and that she had not a single friend on earth.

Mrs. Travers's musical crush was a success; the tenor sang again, first a solo, and then a duet with a high soprano, whose voice, Mrs. Rollick was heard to declare, reminded her so much of 'her daughter Mrs. Wilson's!' Then, of course, Gretchen played again twice, and each time she was more rapturously applauded. And then the guests began to go.

Some were off to other similar entertainments, others to balls, a few to their well-earned night's rest. In a very few minutes the battling, fighting crowd had all vanished and melted away, and only a few intimate friends remained.

Coming downstairs when almost everyone had left the upper rooms, Juliet saw a few persons in the supper-room, and went in *there* to join them.

'Come and sit down, Juliet, and have some champagne and some chicken,' cried Rosa Dalmaine from among a little group by the door, dragging her friend down into a chair; and just then Cis came up behind her.

'Juliet, won't you come and say good-bye to Mdlle. Rudenbach?—she is just going.'

Juliet looked at him for a minute strangely; then a sudden impulse came into her mind.

'Certainly,' she answered; 'where is she?'

'In the hall, waiting for her carriage,' and they went out together.

Gretchen stood ready cloaked for her departure.

'I will see,' said Juliet to herself, 'whether Mrs. Dawson was right.'

And then she went up to the pianiste with outstretched hand.

'I hope you have had some supper, Mdlle. Rudenbach. Are you sure you have had everything you want? will you not have another glass of wine before you go?—for I am sure you must be tired. No?—well, I must thank you much for your very beautiful music; everybody has been delighted with it. I am glad to have made your acquaintance, especially as I hear that you know my part of the world. Perhaps you come from my county—do you?'

'No, Mrs. Travers. I don't think I know it,' answered Gretchen wonderingly, and half turning to Cis for explanation.

'That is not likely, Juliet; what makes you think so?'

'O yes, Mdlle. Rudenbach, you have been at Sotherne, for there was a lady here this evening who said she remembered seeing you in Sotherne Church.'

'In Sotherne Church!' repeated Cis in genuine amazement.

But over Gretchen Rudenbach's usually pale and placid face there leapt suddenly a bright burning blush, flushing vividly from her brow to her neck.

'There is your carriage,' said Juliet, with a little laugh; 'I will not detain you; but I think I must be right about your having been at Sotherne. Good-night, and many thanks for your charming music!'

When Cis came back from handing the lady to her carriage he found his wife still in the hall. 'What do you think of that for a tell-tale blush?' she said to him, with a short little laugh.

'I don't know what you mean,' he answered angrily. 'What on earth do you suppose Mdlle. Rudenbach should be doing down at Sotherne?'

'Ah, that I should indeed be puzzled to say: perhaps you can enlighten me, Cis?'

But Cis, with an angry exclamation, brushed past her, and slammed his study-door in her face. And Juliet went back into the supper-room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PAIR OF LOVERS.

THE rays of the afternoon July sun were beating down fiercely upon the blaze of geraniums and calceolarias on the lawn at Sotherne, where the parrot was swinging violently backwards and forwards, with screams of joy, in his cage, and where Andrews, the under-gardener, toiled and sweltered painfully up and down after the mowing machine. The striped sunblinds were all down in front of the drawing-room and library windows on that side of the house, so that not a ray of sunlight could creep into those two rooms; then came a hedge of laurel close up to the house, and beyond it another window, unprotected by blind or curtain, wide open, and not looking on to the lawn at all, but on to a straight gravel walk which led from the back regions into the gardens.

The prospect from this window was not a cheerful one—just that short bit of walk bounded on either side by thick laurel and holly bushes and another evergreen in front—a dark, dismal-looking yew tree, which completely shut out any further view.

On a hot day like this, the little dark corner of the shrubbery was, perhaps, not unpleasing to look at; suggesting, as it did, coolness, shade, and tranquillity; but one could not help thinking how dismal it must be on the many days of the year when it rained, or blew, or snowed from morning till night. There was not much inducement, one would think, for the occupant of that ground-floor room to look out of the window. And yet at the present moment the window is, as I said, wide open, and a young woman, with both elbows on the window sill, is leaning idly out of it, and looking down the very bounded limit of the gravel walk in front of it.

Time, since we have seen her last, has dealt gently with the fair Ernestine, for it is none other than our old acquaintance who so leans and looks from her work-room window. Her brunette skin is as clear, her black, dickey-bird eyes are as bright and piercing, her figure is as trim and natty as when we last saw her, five years ago. But Ernestine looks considerably bored. There is a heap of finery on the table, and a dinner dress belonging to her mistress, at which she ought to be working, lies on the floor behind her, where she has cast it impatiently from her with an



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evident intention of leaving it there for the present, while she pursues the course of her meditations.

‘*Mon Dieu !* how dull it is here now!’ exclaims Ernestine aloud to herself, with a despairing sigh. ‘Never one goes to *Londres !* never one sees any young persons ! and the *messieurs* that come here, never they bring any valets ! If it was not for the money I must get some day from *Madame*, I would not stay here one day—not one day ! it is *triste à faire mourir*. Why, it was better in the days of *Madame Travers*, *Mademoiselle Juliette*, and that gentil Colonel Fleming !—ce pauvre Colonel Fleming ! Que *Madame* l’a donc joliment triché ! Après tout, if *Mademoiselle Juliette* had married him, they would perhaps have come here often, and we might have had a little changement. Now, never I get an affaire du cœur except with that stupide Jams—ah ça ! qu’il est donc bête, ce Jams ! mais enfin,’ with a shrug of her shoulders,—‘*mais enfin, faute de mieux !*’ and Ernestine sighed again dolefully. ‘No amusements, no intrigues, no excitements, nothing now but ce gros monsieur très-laid, who makes some faces at me every time he does meet me on the stairs, as if I was the diable lui-même ! and only the stupid Jams to talk to ; but where can he be, that Jams ! is he never coming to-day, I wonder !’

At this point of her reflections there was a step on the gravel walk, and James the footman—the old original James, from whom long ago she had wheedled the key of the letter-bag, and whose constancy to the object of his affections had remained unshaken ever since that time, appeared round the corner with a simpering and somewhat sheepish grin on his mutton-chop-whiskered face.

‘Ah, Mam’zell, you are watching for me !’ he exclaimed delightedly.

‘Ah, yes, cruel !’ sighed Ernestine sentimentally ; ‘you are so late to-day. Where is Heegs ?’

‘Mr. ‘Iggs is a-sunning ‘imself in the kitching garden, and a-refreshing on himself with his Missus’s wall-fruit,’ replied James facetiously, seating himself on the edge of the window-sill, and striving in vain to imprison one of his fair charmer’s hands.

‘*Laissez-moi tranquille !*’ exclaimed Ernestine, slapping at him playfully. ‘I have some serious things to say to you, Monsieur Jams. What do you think of it all ?’

‘Of all what, my hangel ?’

‘Why, of ce Monsieur who is here, of course ?’

‘Oh, old Lamps ?’ cried James, for so he respectfully was in the habit, behind Mr. Higgs’s back, of denominating the Rev. Daniel Lamplough, who was Mrs. Blair’s present guest. ‘Old Lamps ? oh, what should I think of him, except that he’s a mean beast ? he

was here a fortnight last year, and he only give me two-and-six when he went away, and I had cleaned all his boots, warnished the shabby old clumps up till they looked like a gentleman's almost, besides a-packing and a-unpacking of his portmanty—and a raggeder, wus-made lot of shirts I never did see in a gentleman's wardrobe in all my born days! What should I think of him, my dear, except that he's a stingy old bloke?"

"Ah, but I think much more than that, Monsieur Jams!" said Ernestine, shaking her head solemnly.

"What do you think, Mam'zell?"

"Listen: I do think that this Monsieur—what do you call him?—Lamplou will wish to marry Madame Blair!"

"No-o-o!" faltered James in amazement, while his mouth fell very wide open.

"Yes, I am sure—you will see," said Ernestine, nodding her head sagaciously and solemnly; "he does want to marry her, and Madame will not say no; it is affreux that your *prêtres* should marry themselves!"

"Them's your popish notions, my dear!" here put in her swain reprovingly.

"But nevertheless it is so," continued the lady, scornfully ignoring the interruption. "And Madame will probabement marry herself to this fat monsieur; and then, my poor Jams, what will become of you? you will lose your place; the house here will be all broken up, the servants will all go, you will have to get another place."

"But you, Mam'zell?" cried James, aghast at this dismal picture,—"you?—what will become of you? Will you go and live with Mrs. Lamplough in London, and be diwided from *me*?"

"I!" cried Ernestine indignantly; "*I* go and live in the house of a married *curé*, and be made to go to his miserable church, and to do what a fat, ugly monsieur tells me! I!"

"Then you'll come along with me and marry me, my dear?" cried the ardent lover rapturously.

"Marry you! and upon what, if you please, Monsieur Jams? can one marry upon rien de tout but love? No, Monsieur Jams, when these things do force me to leave Madame Blair," continued Ernestine, rising from the window with a tragical air, "I do go and bury my sorrows in the bosom of mine own country—in my beautiful France! There is the carriage coming home, Monsieur Jams; go to your duties!"

And the unfortunate James, aghast at his lady-love's eloquence, and at her rejection of his tender advances, was perforce obliged to leave her suddenly by the same way that he came, lest Higgs, *returning* from his airing in the kitchen garden, should unwittingly

run up against him and discover the way in which his subordinate was accustomed to waste his time when he imagined him to be polishing the spoons and forks.

The sleepy old horses jog-trotted up to the front door after their hour's drive, which, except under very strong pressure, was the utmost extent of time which the coachman—also an old servant, and as much a character in his way as was the great Higgs—would ever allow them to be out.

James, still slightly ruffled with his parting words with Ernestine, hastened to open the carriage door and to let down the steps; and from it there alighted our old friend Mrs. Blair, followed by an elderly man who was none other than the reverend gentleman whose matrimonial intentions Ernestine had been so well able to fathom.

Last year, when Mr. Lamplough in his newly widowed woe had been brought down by a mutual friend to stay at Sotherne for a week or two for the benefit of his health and spirits, nothing could exceed the sweetness of the consolations which his hostess had all day long poured like balm into that bruised and stricken soul.

With gentle sighs she had often gazed at him fixedly, and then, murmuring 'dear friend!' had raised her handkerchief furtively to her eyes as though her feelings were too much for her. Frequently she told him that she too had suffered—that she too had sorrowed—that only a woman who had lost a beloved husband can truly sympathise with a man who has been bereft of a dearly beloved wife; that such sympathising souls are sent into this world to console and to comfort each other; that now for the first time she had found that companion soul who was able to respond with perfect sympathy to the sorrows which she had borne alone for so many years.

And then the attentions, the *petits soins* with which Mrs. Blair encompassed her guest were unceasing and endless.

How she studied his fancies and his pleasures, how attentively she drew the curtain behind his chair lest he should feel the slightest draught, how assiduously she hunted out his favourite books and sent for his favourite papers and magazines, and, last but not least, how carefully she piled his plate with the choicest morsels and ordered the most *recherché* dishes to tempt his appetite, and almost went on her knees to persuade Higgs to bring forth the best old port after dinner!

In all this Mrs. Blair had an object in view; for she, like Ernestine, was getting tired of the dulness of Sotherne, where she could just afford to live, but which she could not afford to leave even for a month's trip to London in the season. And was not the Rev. Daniel Lamplough incumbent of the district church of St.

Matthias, situated in the very heart of Belgravia?—where his eloquent and somewhat violent denunciations against his Holiness the Pope, and the somewhat hazy female connected with that prelate whom he was in the habit of designating as the ‘Scarlet Lady,’ attracted rich and crowded congregations, whose pew rents brought in a very comfortable income to their worthy vicar.

Mrs. Blair did not think the position would be altogether a bad one; and then she calculated that she would probably be allowed to retain Sotherne as a country residence as well. Juliet had said no word of ever ejecting her from it; and she seemed to care so little now for the home of her childhood, of which she had once been so passionately fond, that it did not appear likely that she would wish to return to it herself.

To be the wife of a popular London preacher, residing during the greater part of the year in a well-appointed house in Lower Eccleston Street; to talk of Sotherne as ‘my country place,’ and to be able to spend the autumn months there; to play the country Lady Bountiful at Sotherne, and the woman of fashion up in town,—was an existence which presented many charms to Mrs. Blair’s vivid imagination.

The lover, on his side, had also been making his calculations. He had noted carefully the comfort and luxury of Mrs. Blair’s surroundings at Sotherne. He knew, indeed, that the place did not belong to her but to her stepdaughter, but he imagined that she rented it from her. He saw her surrounded by many servants male and female, with a carriage to drive about in, and hothouses and vineries to keep up; he appreciated her excellent cuisine, and tasted the first-rate wines which appeared upon her table. All these things, Mr. Lamplough knew, could not be had without money; widows generally have fat jointures—indeed, what is a widow without a jointure?—therefore it was not surprising that he should give Mrs. Blair credit for one.

The mutual friend who had introduced him to her had not known much about her private concerns; there was no one else to tell him; and certainly Mrs. Blair herself was not likely to divulge to him the fact that the establishment was entirely kept up by her stepdaughter; that carriage, horses, gardens, and servants did not cost her one farthing; that the good old wine was allowed her by Juliet’s liberality whenever Higgs could be induced to bring it forth; and that, in fact, her own living, and that of her guests, and Ernestine’s wages, were the only things which came out of her own pocket. Mr. Lamplough knew none of these things, and Mrs. Blair knew that he did not, and she was not in the least likely to enlighten him.

Of course, during his first visit to Sotherne, in the character of a forlorn and heart-broken widower, it would have been in the highest degree indecorous had he alluded, however faintly, to the possibilities of consolation which life might still contain for him; but when, after an interval of eight months, during which time these 'companion souls' corresponded freely and regularly, Mr. Lamplough again returned to Sotherne, he came with lavender instead of black gloves, with a hat-band four inches wide in place of the eight-inch width of first woe; he came as a widower, indeed, but as a widower to whom happiness is again possible—he came, in short, to woo and to conquer. Mrs. Blair seemed to him to combine every requisite for duly filling the position which he contemplated asking her to occupy. She was still a most elegant and pretty-looking woman, with pleasing manners and a knowledge of the world, and she was, he believed, devotedly attached to him.

There was only one point upon which Mr. Lamplough felt some uneasiness, and where his religious scruples threatened to sternly bar the way to the impulses of his heart. It seemed to him that Mrs. Blair's religious views were most lamentably popish in their tendencies. She worshipped weekly, and professed to delight in Sotherne Church, where divine service was conducted in a way that Mr. Lamplough did not at all approve of. There were a cross and candlesticks on the altar, and a memorial window representing the Virgin and Child, in memory of Mr. Blair's first young wife; good Mr. Dawson preached in his surplice, and had daily morning prayers throughout the year,—all which things were an abomination in Mr. Lamplough's eyes.

But a worse offence even than this was the presence of Mrs. Blair's French Roman Catholic maid. How Mrs. Blair could suffer an emissary of the Pope, a Jesuit perchance, to remain, in all her unconverted iniquity, under her very roof, was a fact which filled the righteous soul of the Reverend Daniel with pious horror whenever he thought upon it. He never passed Ernestine upon the stairs or in the passages without a secret shudder, and without privately ejaculating, 'Get thee behind me, Satan!'—an expression which, however, he would not have dared to repeat aloud, as, had he done so, the vivacious-looking waiting maid would have been quite capable of boxing his ears, or tearing out his hair, or otherwise inflicting some bodily injury upon him with her strong little brown hands.

Nevertheless, Mr. Lamplough felt sure that the lady of his affections sinned from ignorance only in this particular. Were the horrors of the popish faith once pointed out to her by an earnest Christian like himself, he felt sure that she would at once

see and lament the error that she had unwittingly fallen into in harbouring this daughter of Babylon for so many years in her household. Mr. Lamplough was well determined that no such blot should mar the fair Protestantism of his own establishment. On the very day that Mrs. Blair consented to resign her happiness into his keeping, Ernestine should take her departure.

It was after dinner—that genial hour when, having well fed and well drunk, man is at peace with himself and all mankind. The coffee had been served, the lamp brought in, the curtains drawn lightly over the still open windows; there was no chance of any further interruption from Higgs until ten o'clock.

Mr. Daniel Lamplough leaned back in a luxurious satin-covered armchair, rested his hands one on each of his knees, and smiled benignly at his hostess. He was not a pleasant or romantic-looking lover certainly, and Mrs. Blair could not help thinking so as she glanced up at him from her work. Time was when she had dreamt of other kinds of men, of tall soldierly men with refined faces and polished manners—men, for instance, like Colonel Fleming had been. But those dreams were all over for her now—she was obliged to smother them away with a sigh; when a woman is past forty, she must take what comes in her way and be thankful.

And the man that had come in her way was not prepossessing in appearance. Mr. Lamplough was fat, and even greasy-looking in the face; his cheeks, of a dull red hue, hung down in flabby, fleshy bags upon his neck, and were adorned with long straggling yellowish whiskers flecked with grey; his eyes were small and pig-like; his nose was wide and rather red; and his hair was lank and long, and smelt of the free use of hair-oil. Nor were his clothes put on with that neatness and care which invariably pleases the female eye: his coat was wrinkled, shiny, and shabby; his boots were large, thick, and clumsy; his shirt and voluminous white tie were never of the cleanest, and always gave indications of that 'healthy action of the skin' which doctors say is such a desirable condition of the body, and which Mr. Lamplough apparently enjoyed in a very high degree.

The real fact was that the man was not a gentleman—he was essentially vulgar. And Mrs. Blair had lived quite enough among men who were thoroughbred to be perfectly conscious of this failing in her would-be lover. But, after all, a woman of her age cannot afford to be too fastidious!

Mrs. Blair herself was to the full as elegant and well-preserved a woman as ever.

Her fair hair was still done up in the same mysterious and

innumerable bows and puffs over her high white forehead, her eyes were still fringed with the strikingly dark lashes, and the carmine upon her cheeks and lips was as vivid as it used to be; but then these are things in which art so far surpasses nature.

As she sat in a faultless evening toilette by the shaded lamp, with some plain work in her white hands—it was a checked print frock for a little village child, a style of work she had lately adopted in deference to the serious profession of the man whom she was desirous of captivating—Mr. Lamplough gazed at her admiringly, and thought that she certainly was a very pleasant object to look upon, and that she would be a great ornament to his home in Lower Ecclestone Street.

‘How industrious you are this evening, dear Mrs. Blair!’ he said, in that gentle cooing voice which he always adopted when addressing the fair sex.

Mrs. Blair smiled blandly. ‘I am anxious to get this little frock finished to-night; it is for little Susan Snuggs in the village. That is a very sad case, dear Mr. Lamplough; seven little children and an invalid mother—and the father gets such poor wages! If I can do some little trifle for the poor things, I am always so glad.’

‘Always tender-hearted, always occupied in good works, dear friend!’ murmured Mr. Lamplough tenderly. ‘Ah! where is the limit to lovely woman’s influence when she gives her time to clothe the poor and to comfort the broken-hearted! A ministering angel thou!’ added Mr. Lamplough, carried away by an effusion of feeling; though whether the ejaculation was addressed to Mrs. Blair in particular, or to the whole of the female sex in general, was not quite clear.

‘Dear friend, you over-estimate my poor efforts; you are over-indulgent to me!’ murmured the widow, bending over her work.}

‘Not at all, my dear lady, not at all. Do I not know your worth? have I not watched you daily in your home, where you so gracefully and in such a Christian spirit fulfil all the varied relations of mistress, of hostess, and of friend? have I not learnt to appreciate all the sweet graces and the pure virtues of your character, dear—may I not almost say, dearest?—friend!’ and here Mr. Lamplough rose, not without an effort, from his low chair, and, carried away by the enthusiasm of his feelings, dropped with a thud upon both his fat knees in front of his innamorata.

With ready presence of mind Mrs. Blair had, by a dexterous whisk, swept her delicate muslin flounces away just in time to save their being crumpled by the substantial knees of her prostrate lover, and now, with a pretty flutter, she appeared to be overwhelmed with modest confusion.

‘Dear Mr. Lamplough, pray rise—I entreat you: if anyone should come in—’ she stammered.

‘No one will come in; Higgs has already brought the tea,’ said Mr. Lamplough, with practical bathos. ‘No, dearest Mrs. Blair, never will I rise—never will I move from this spot—until you deign to give a favourable answer to my prayer; until you promise to comfort my lonely heart, and to bless my lonely home!’

‘Mr. Lamplough!’ murmured the widow, hiding her face behind her lace handkerchief.

‘Sweet sympathising spirit, deign to listen to my suit; let us join our hearts, our hands, and I may say our fortunes—may I not call you my own, my Maria?’

‘Mr. Lamplough!’ again murmured the lady in a fainter voice.

‘Nay, why this formality? call me Daniel, *your* Daniel!’ tenderly whispered the lover, who began to be tired of kneeling. For a man of his size and age it was a trying posture, and began to make his back ache, in spite of his previous vows of remaining there for an indefinite period. ‘Call me Daniel!’ he exclaimed; and with a view to speedily bringing about the conclusion of this physically painful scene, he further proceeded to place his arms around the coy form of his beloved.

Mrs. Blair, after uttering a faint protesting cry, whispered ‘Daniel!’ as she was told, and let her head sink gracefully down upon his shoulder. Mr. Lamplough afterwards discovered several smeary streaks of white and pink powder upon his coat where that fair cheek had lain—a discovery which filled him with great curiosity and unbounded amazement, for he had believed in Mrs Blair’s complexion as firmly as he did in her money.

That discovery, however, was only made at a subsequent period. Nothing occurred to mar those first few moments of bliss.

As soon, however, as the lovers had a little settled down, and Mr. Lamplough had regained the secure comfort of his easy chair,—which, however, he wheeled-up considerably nearer to the lady of his affections than it had been before he had declared his intentions to her,—he at once took occasion to establish the mastery which he intended to assume over her by broaching the subject that lay upon his conscience—concerning the dismissal of the ‘Babylonian woman.’

‘There is one little sacrifice, my love, which I must ask your affection to make for me,’ he began.

‘Vanity!’ cried Mrs. Blair, who had already assumed the playful *coquetry* suitable to an affianced maiden. ‘Vanity! as if you

did not know that there is nothing I would not do for you, Daniel!’

‘Dearest!’ murmured he, pressing her hand tenderly, ‘I know you love me too well to refuse the trifling sacrifice I must ask of you, especially when I point out to you how unsuited to the high Christian calling of a Protestant minister’s wife such an attendant is,—my love, I must ask you to send away that popish French maid at once.’

‘Send away Ernestine!’ gasped Mrs. Blair.

‘Even so, my chosen Maria; the association of a Christian Protestant lady with an idolatrous papist savours too much of offering of meats to idols——’

‘What possible harm can poor Ernestine do?’ cried Mrs. Blair, with more sharpness than is generally admissible in the sweet converse of affianced lovers. ‘I never heard her talk of religion at all, and I am sure she doesn’t care where she goes to church; I cannot get on at all without Ernestine, I am so used to her; and she has been with me so long, and understands my ways so well. No, really, Mr. Lamplough, I cannot send away Ernestine—I will do anything else to please you, but not that.’

‘And yet, dear friend,’ said Mr. Lamplough, in that gentle voice which was never raised in anger, and in which yet might be discerned a certain ring of determination which augured badly for Mrs. Blair’s chances of having her own way,—‘and yet that is unfortunately the one thing which my conscience is obliged to ask of you—the one thing, I may say, which you must give up to me as a proof of the sincerity of your affection.’

There was a moment’s silence, during which Mrs. Blair bit her lip in vexation. She saw plainly enough that Mr. Lamplough made the dismissal of Ernestine the *sine quâ non* of the engagement between them,—that she must either give up the offending waiting-maid, or else her new-born hopes of a second marriage and an establishment in Belgravia.

It would be dreadful work, doing without Ernestine, who knew her so well—who understood so many cunning arts in hair-dressing and in face-decorating; how she should get on at first without her, she could not think; but then, it would be still more dreadful to give up those dreams of London seasons and London gaieties which she seemed to have but just secured within her grasp. No, Mrs. Blair felt, anything but that: it was very possible that she might find another maid, English and Protestant, who would be as clever in the mysteries of her profession as was Ernestine, but it was hardly possible that she would have another chance of a second

marriage, and that with a man who possessed a house in Lower Eccleston Street.

With one great gulping sigh in homage to Ernestine's varied talents, Mrs. Blair gave in.

'Of course, Daniel, if you make such a point of it, I must do what you wish—but the girl is very clever, and will be a great loss to me; still, if you really insist upon it, of course I am only too happy to please you.'

'There's my own sweet Maria!' cried Mr. Lamplough, lapsing again into the fond lover, and pressing his betrothed's hand tenderly to his lips. 'And you will send her away to-morrow, my love?'

'To-morrow!' cried poor Mrs. Blair, in dismay.

'Yes, my love; I can no longer allow a child of Belial to rest under the same roof as my promised bride.'

'But surely not to-morrow. What excuse can I give for turning her out of the house like that after she has been with me so long? and what shall I do for a maid? Pray allow me at least to give her a month's warning; consider the inconvenience—the injustice——'

'Say no more, my love—the girl is very frivolous, and her manner to myself is full of disrespect. There is a very nice, modest-looking housemaid, who can surely wait upon you for a week or two until you can find another maid. You will, I know, do as I wish, my love; give her a month's wages to-morrow morning, and let her go: the sight of that popish woman is abhorrent to me!' and, as if to close the discussion, Mr. Lamplough, after once again pressing Mrs. Blair's hand most tenderly within his own, took up the *Record*, out of which he proceeded to read aloud such choice extracts as he thought might interest the future wife of the incumbent of St. Matthias' Church.

And Mrs. Blair smothered her discomfiture as well as she could, endeavouring to console herself with dreams of the select entertainments she would give when once she was established as mistress of that house in Lower Eccleston Street.

(To be continued.)

BELGRAVIA.

JANUARY 1877.

The Captain's Last Love.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

I.

HE captain is still in the prime of life,' the widow remarked to me. 'He has given up his ship; he possesses a sufficient income, and he has nobody to live with him. I should like to know why he doesn't marry.'

'The captain was excessively rude to me,' the widow's younger sister added, on her side. 'When we took leave of him in London, I asked if there was any likelihood of his joining us at Brighton this season. He turned his back on me as if I had mortally offended him; and he made me this extraordinary answer: "Miss, I hate the sight of the sea!" The man has been a sailor all his life. What does he mean by saying that he hates the sight of the sea?'

I was entirely at the mercy of the widow and the widow's sister. The other members of our little society at the boarding-house had all gone to a concert. I was known to be the captain's oldest friend, and to be well acquainted with all the events of the captain's life. No polite alternative was left but to answer the questions that had been put to me.

'I can satisfy your curiosity,' I said to the two ladies, 'without violating any confidence reposed in me—if you only have patience enough to listen to a very strange story.'

It is needless to report the answer that I received. We sent away the tea-things, and we trimmed the lamp; and then I told the ladies why the captain would never marry, and why (sailor as he was) he hated the sight of the sea.

II.

THE British merchantman 'Fortuna' (on the last occasion when our friend the captain took command of the ship) sailed from the

port of Liverpool with the morning tide. She was bound to certain islands in the Pacific Ocean, in search of a cargo of sandalwood—a commodity which, in those days, found a ready and profitable market in the Chinese Empire.

A large discretion was reposed in the captain by the owners, who knew him to be not only thoroughly trustworthy, but a man of rare abilities, carefully cultivated during the leisure hours of a sea-faring life. Devoted heart and soul to his professional duties, he was a hard reader and an excellent linguist as well. Having had considerable experience among the inhabitants of the Pacific Islands, he had attentively studied their characters, and had mastered their language in more than one of its many dialects. Thanks to the valuable information thus obtained, the captain was never at a loss to conciliate the islanders; and he had more than once succeeded in finding a cargo, under circumstances in which other captains had failed. Possessing these merits, he had his fair share of human defects. For instance, he was a little too conscious of his own good looks—of his bright chestnut hair and whiskers, of his beautiful blue eyes, of his fair white skin which many a woman had looked at with the admiration that is akin to envy. His shapely hands were protected by gloves; a broad-brimmed hat sheltered his complexion in fine weather from the sun. He was nice in his choice of perfumes; he never drank spirits, and the smell of tobacco was abhorrent to him. New men among his officers and his crew, seeing him studying in his cabin, perfectly dressed, washed and brushed until he was an object speckless to look upon, soft of voice and careful in his choice of words, were apt to conclude that they had trusted themselves at sea under a commander who was an anomalous mixture of a schoolmaster and a dandy. But if the slightest infraction of discipline took place, or if the storm rose and the vessel was in peril, it was soon discovered that the gloved hands held a rod of iron, that the soft voice could make itself heard through wind and sea from one end of the deck to the other, and that it issued orders which the greatest fool on board knew to be orders that saved the ship. Throughout his professional life, the general impression that this variously-gifted man produced on the little world about him was always the same. Some few liked him; everybody respected him; nobody understood him. The captain accepted those results, and went on reading his books and protecting his complexion; and his owners shook hands with him, and put up with his gloves.

The 'Fortuna' touched at Rio for water, and for supplies of food which might prove useful in case of scurvy. In due time the ship rounded Cape Horn, in the finest weather ever known in those

latitudes by the oldest hand on board. The mate, one Mr. Duncalf—a boozing, wheezing, self-confident old sea-dog, with a flaming face, and a vast vocabulary of oaths—swore that he didn't like it. 'The foul weather's coming, my lads,' said Mr. Duncalf. 'Mark my words, there'll be wind enough to take the curl out of the captain's whiskers before we are many days older!'

During a fortnight more the ship cruised in search of the islands to which the owners had directed her. At the end of that time the wind took the predicted liberties with the captain's whiskers, and Mr. Duncalf stood revealed to an admiring crew in the character of a true prophet.

For three days and three nights the 'Fortuna' ran before the storm, at the mercy of wind and sea. On the fourth morning the gale blew itself out, the sun appeared again towards noon, and the captain was able to take an observation. The result informed him that he was in a part of the Pacific Ocean with which he was entirely unacquainted. Thereupon the officers were called into the cabin. Mr. Duncalf, as became his rank, was consulted first. His opinion possessed the merit of brevity. 'My lads, the ship's bewitched. Take my word for it, we shall wish ourselves back in our own latitudes before we are many days older.' Which, being interpreted, meant that Mr. Duncalf was lost, like his superior officer, in a part of the ocean of which he knew nothing.

The captain decided (the weather being now quite fine again) to stand on, under an easy press of sail, for four-and-twenty hours more, and to see if anything came of it.

Soon after nightfall something did come of it. The look-out forward hailed the deck with the dreadful cry, 'Breakers ahead!' In less than a minute more everybody heard the crash of the broken water. The 'Fortuna' was put about, and came round slowly in the light wind. Thanks to the timely alarm and the fine weather, the safety of the vessel was easily provided for. They kept her under short sail, and they waited for the morning.

The dawn showed them in the distance a glorious green island, not marked in the ship's charts—an island girt about by a coral reef, and having in its midst a high-peaked mountain, which looked, through the telescope, like a mountain of volcanic origin. Mr. Duncalf, taking his morning draught of rum-and-water, shook his groggy old head, and said (and swore): 'My lads, I don't like the look of that island.' The captain was of a different opinion. He had one of the ship's boats put into the water; he armed himself and six of his crew who accompanied him, and away he went in the morning sunlight to visit the island.

Skirting round the coral reef, they found a natural breach, which

proved to be broad enough and deep enough not only for the passage of the boat but of the ship herself if needful. Crossing the broad inner belt of smooth water, they approached the golden sands of the island, strewed with magnificent shells, and crowded by the dusky islanders—men, women, and children, all waiting in breathless astonishment to see the strangers land.

The captain kept the boat off, and examined the islanders carefully. The innocent, simple people danced, and sang, and ran into the water, imploring their wonderful white visitors by gestures to come on shore. Not a creature among them carried arms of any sort; a hospitable curiosity animated the entire population. The men cried out, in their smooth, musical language, 'Come and eat!' and the plump, black-eyed women, all laughing together, added their own invitation, 'Come and be kissed!' Was it in mortals to resist such temptations as these? The captain led the way on shore, and the women surrounded him in an instant, and screamed for joy at the glorious spectacle of his whiskers, his complexion, and his gloves. So the mariners from the far north were welcomed to the newly-discovered island.

III.

THE morning wore on. Mr. Duncalf, in charge of the ship, cursing the island, over his rum-and-water, as 'a beastly green strip of a place, not laid down in any Christian chart,' was kept waiting four mortal hours before the captain returned to his command, and reported himself to his officers as follows:

He had found his knowledge of the Polynesian dialects sufficient to make himself in some degree understood by the natives of the new island. Under the guidance of the chief he had made a first journey of exploration, and had seen for himself that the place was a marvel of natural beauty and fertility. The one barren spot in it was the peak of the volcanic mountain, composed of crumbling rock; originally, no doubt, lava and ashes, which had cooled and consolidated with the lapse of time. So far as he had seen, the crater at the top was now an extinct crater. But, if he had understood rightly, the chief had spoken of earthquakes and eruptions at certain bygone periods, some of which lay within his own earliest recollections of the place. Adverting next to considerations of practical utility, the captain announced that he had seen sandalwood enough on the island to load a dozen ships, and that the natives were willing to part with it for a few toys and trinkets generally distributed among them. To the mate's disgust, the 'Fortuna' was taken inside the reef that day, and was anchored before

sunset in a natural harbour. Twelve hours of recreation, beginning with the next morning, were granted to the men, under the wise restrictions in such cases established by the captain. That interval over, the work of cutting the precious wood and loading the ship was to be unintermittingly pursued.

Mr. Duncalf had the first watch after the 'Fortuna' had been made snug. He took the boatswain aside (an ancient sea-dog like himself), and he said in a gruff whisper: 'My lad, this here ain't the island laid down in our sailing orders. See if mischief don't come of disobeying orders before we are many days older.'

Nothing in the shape of mischief happened that night. But at sunrise the next morning a suspicious circumstance occurred; and Mr. Duncalf whispered to the boatswain: 'What did I tell you?' The captain and the chief of the islanders held a private conference in the cabin; and the captain, after first forbidding any communication with the shore until his return, suddenly left the ship alone with the chief, in the chief's own canoe.

What did this strange disappearance mean? The captain himself, when he took his seat in the canoe, would have been puzzled to answer that question.

'Shall we be a long time away from the ship?' he asked.

The chief answered mysteriously: 'Long time or short time, your life depends on it, and the lives of your men.'

Paddling his light little vessel in silence over the smooth water inside the reef, the chief took his visitor ashore at a part of the island which was quite new to the captain. The two crossed a ravine and ascended an eminence beyond. There the chief stopped, and silently pointed out to sea.

The captain looked in the direction indicated to him, and discovered a second and a smaller island, lying away to the south-west at a distance of under two miles. Taking out his telescope from the case by which it was slung at his back, he examined the place through his glass. Two of the native canoes were lying off the shore of the new island; and the men in them appeared to be all kneeling or crouching in curiously-chosen attitudes. Shifting his range a little, the captain next beheld the figure of a tall and solitary man—the one inhabitant of the island whom he could discover. The man was standing on the highest point of a rocky cape. A fire was burning at his feet. Now he lifted his arms solemnly to the sky; now he dropped some invisible fuel into the fire, which made a blue smoke; and now he cast other invisible objects into the canoes floating beneath him, which the islanders reverently received with bodies that crouched in abject submission. Lowering his telescope, the captain looked round at the chief for an explanation. The chief

gave the explanation readily. His language may be interpreted in these terms:

‘Wonderful white stranger! the island you see yonder is a Holy Island. As such it is *Taboo*—an island sanctified and set apart. The honourable person whom you notice on the rock is an all-powerful favourite of the gods. He is by vocation a Sorcerer, and by rank a Priest. You now see him casting charms and blessings into the canoes of our fishermen, who kneel to him for fine weather and great plenty of fish. If any profane person, native or stranger, presumes to set foot on that island, my otherwise peaceable subjects will (in the performance of a religious duty) put that person to death. Mention this to your men. They will be fed by my male people and fondled by my female people so long as they keep clear of the Holy Isle. As they value their lives, let them respect this prohibition. Is it understood between us? Wonderful white stranger, my canoe is waiting for you. Let us go back.’

Understanding enough of the chief’s language (illustrated by his gestures) to receive in the right spirit the communication thus addressed to him, the captain repeated the warning to the ship’s company in the plainest possible English. The officers and men then took their holiday on shore, with the exception of Mr. Duncalf, who positively refused to leave the ship. For twelve delightful hours they were fed by the male people and fondled by the female people, and then they were mercilessly torn from the flesh-pots and the arms of their new friends, and set to work on the sandal-wood in good earnest. Mr. Duncalf superintended the loading, and waited for the mischief that was to come of disobeying the owners’ orders, with a confidence worthy of a better cause.

IV.

STRANGELY enough, chance once more declared itself in favour of the mate’s point of view. The mischief did actually come, and the chosen instrument of it was a handsome young islander, who was one of the sons of the chief.

The captain had taken a fancy to the sweet-tempered, intelligent lad. Pursuing his studies in the dialect of the island at leisure hours, he had made the chief’s son his tutor, and had amused himself by instructing the youth in English by way of return. More than a month had passed in this intercourse, and the ship’s lading was being rapidly completed, when, in an evil hour, the talk between the two turned on the subject of the Holy Island.

‘Does nobody live on the island but the Priest?’ the captain asked.

The chief's son looked round him suspiciously. 'Promise me you won't tell anybody!' he began very earnestly.

The captain gave his promise.

'There is one other person on the island,' the lad whispered; 'a person to feast your eyes upon if you could only see her! She is the Priest's daughter. She was taken to the island in her infancy, and has never left it since. In that sacred solitude she has never looked on any human beings but her father and her mother. I once saw her from my canoe, taking care not to attract her notice, or to approach too near the holy soil. Oh, so young, dear master, and oh, so beautiful!' The chief's son completed the description by kissing his own hands in silent rapture.

The captain's fine blue eyes sparkled. He asked no more questions; but, later on that day, he paid a secret visit to the eminence which overlooked the Holy Island. The next day and the next he stole away to the same place. On the fourth day fatal Destiny favoured him. He saw the nymph of the island through his telescope, standing alone upon the cape on which he had already discovered her father. She was feeding some tame birds, which looked like turtle-doves. The glass showed the captain her pure white robe, fluttering in the sea breeze; her long black hair falling to her heels; her slim and supple young figure, her simple grace of attitude as she turned this way and that, attending to the wants of her birds. Before her was the blue ocean; behind her was the lustrous green of the island forest. The captain's vivid imagination supplied the inevitable defects of the glass. He looked and looked until his eyes and his arms ached. And when she flitted lightly back into the forest, with her birds after her, the captain shut up his telescope with a sigh, and said to himself, 'I have seen an angel!'

From that hour he became an altered man; he was languid, silent, interested in nothing. General opinion decided that he was going to be taken ill.

A week more elapsed, and the officers and crew began to talk of the voyage to their market in China. The captain refused to fix a day for sailing. He even took offence at being asked to decide. Instead of sleeping in his cabin, he went ashore for the night.

Not many hours afterwards, just before daybreak, Mr. Duncalf, snoring in his cabin on deck, was aroused by a hand laid on his shoulder. The swinging lamp, still alight, showed him the dusky face of the chief's son, convulsed with terror. By wild signs, by disconnected words in the little English which he had learnt, the lad tried to make the mate understand him. Dense Mr. Duncalf, understanding nothing, hailed the second officer, on the opposite side of the deck. The second officer was young and intelligent.

He rightly interpreted the terrible news that had come to the ship. The captain had broken his own rules. Watching his opportunity, under cover of the night, he had taken a canoe, and had secretly crossed the channel to the Holy Island. No one had been near him at the time but the chief's son. The lad had vainly tried to induce him to abandon his desperate enterprise, and had vainly waited on the shore in the hope of hearing the sound of the paddle announcing his return. Beyond all reasonable doubt, the infatuated man had set foot on the shores of the tabooed island.

The one chance for his life was to conceal what he had done until the ship could be got out of the harbour, and then (if no harm had come to him in the interval) to rescue him after nightfall. It was decided to spread the report that he had really been taken ill, and that he was confined to his cabin. The chief's son, whose heart the captain's kindness had won, could be trusted to do this, and to keep the secret faithfully for the captain's sake.

Towards noon the next day they attempted to take the ship to sea, and failed for want of wind. Hour by hour the heat grew more and more oppressive. As the day declined, there were ominous appearances in the western heaven. The natives, who had given some trouble during the day by their anxiety to see the captain, and by their curiosity to know the cause of the sudden preparations for the ship's departure, all went ashore together, looking suspiciously at the sky, and reappeared no more. Just at midnight the ship (still in her snug berth inside the reef) suddenly trembled from her keel to her mast-heads. Mr. Duncalf, surrounded by the startled crew, shook his knotty fist at the island as if he could see it in the dark. 'My lads, what did I tell you? That was a shock of earthquake.'

With the morning the threatening aspect of the weather unexpectedly disappeared. A faint hot breeze from the land, just enough to give the ship steerage-way, offered Mr. Duncalf a chance of getting to sea. Slowly the 'Fortuna,' with the mate himself at the wheel, half sailed, half drifted, into the open ocean. At a distance of barely two miles from the island the breeze was felt no more, and the vessel lay becalmed for the rest of the day.

At night the men waited their orders, expecting to be sent after their captain in one of the boats. The intense darkness, the airless heat, and a second shock of earthquake (just felt in the ship at her present distance from the land) warned the mate to be cautious. 'I smell mischief in the air,' said Mr. Duncalf. 'The captain must wait till I am surer of the weather.'

Still no change came with the new day. The dead calm continued, and the airless heat. As the day declined: another

ominous appearance became visible. A thin line of smoke was discovered through the telescope, ascending from the topmost peak of the mountain on the main island. Was the volcano threatening an eruption? The mate for one entertained no doubt of it. 'By the Lord, the place is going to burst up!' said Mr. Duncalf. 'Come what may of it, we must find the captain to-night!'

V.

WHAT was the lost captain doing? and what chance had the crew of finding him that night?

He had committed himself to his desperate adventure, without forming any plan for the preservation of his own safety, without giving even a momentary consideration to the consequences that might follow. The charming picture that he had seen through his telescope had haunted him night and day. The image of the innocent creature, secluded from humanity in her island-solitude, was the one image that filled his mind. A man, passing a woman in the street, acts on the impulse to turn and follow her, and in that one thoughtless moment shapes the destiny of his future life. The captain, seeing the canoe on the beach, acted on a similar impulse when he took the paddle and shaped his reckless course for the tabooed island.

Reaching the shore while it was still dark, he did one sensible thing—he hid the canoe so that it might not betray him when the daylight came. That done, he waited for the morning on the outskirts of the forest.

The trembling light of dawn revealed the mysterious solitude around him. Following the outer limits of the trees, first in one direction, then in another, and finding no trace of any living creature, he decided on penetrating to the interior of the island. He entered the forest.

An hour of walking brought him to rising ground. Continuing the ascent, he got clear of the trees, and stood on the grassy top of a broad cliff which overlooked the sea. An open hut was on the cliff. He cautiously looked in, and discovered that it was empty. The few household utensils left about, and the simple bed of leaves in a corner, were covered with fine, sandy dust. Night birds flew blundering out of inner cavities in the roof, and took refuge in the shadows of the forest below. It was plain that the hut had not been inhabited for some time past.

Standing at the open doorway, and considering what he should do next, the captain saw a bird flying towards him out of the forest. It was a turtle-dove, so tame that it fluttered close up to

him. At the same moment the sound of sweet laughter became audible among the trees. His heart beat fast; he advanced a few steps, and stopped. In a moment more the nymph of the island appeared, in her white robe, ascending the cliff in pursuit of her truant bird. She saw him, and suddenly stood still, struck motionless by the amazing discovery that had burst upon her. The captain approached, smiling and holding out his hand. She never moved; she stood before him in helpless wonderment; her lovely black eyes fixed on him spell-bound; her dusky bosom palpitating above the fallen folds of her robe; her rich red lips parted in mute astonishment. Spell-bound on his side, feasting his eyes on her beauty in silence, the captain after a while recovered himself. He ventured to speak to her in the language of the main island. The sound of his voice, addressing her in the language that she knew, roused the lovely creature to action. She started, stepped close up to him, and dropped on her knees at his feet.

'My father worships invisible deities,' she said, softly. 'Are you a visible deity? Has my mother sent you?' She pointed as she spoke to the deserted hut behind them. 'You appear to me,' she went on, 'in the place where my mother died. Is it for her sake that you show yourself to her child? Beautiful deity! come to the Temple—come to my father.'

The captain gently raised her from the ground. If her father saw him, he was a doomed man. Infatuated as he was, he had sense enough left to announce himself plainly in his own character, as a mortal creature arriving from a far-distant land. The girl instantly drew back from him with a look of terror.

'He is not like my father,' she said to herself; 'he is not like me. Is he the lying demon of the prophecy? Is he the predestined destroyer of our island?'

The captain's experience of the sex showed him the only sure way out of the awkward position in which he was now placed. He appealed to his personal appearance.

'Do I look like a demon?' he asked.

Her eyes met his. A half-smile trembled on her lips. The captain ventured on asking what she meant by the predestined destruction of the island. She held up her hand solemnly, and repeated the prophecy. The Holy Island was threatened with destruction by an evil being, who would one day appear on its shores. To avert the fatality, the place had been sanctified and set apart, under the protection of the gods and their Priest. Here was the reason for the taboo, and for the extraordinary strictness with which it was enforced. Listening attentively to his



THE NYMPH OF THE ISLAND.

charming companion, the captain took her hand, and pressed it gently.

‘Do I feel like a demon?’ he whispered.

Her slim brown fingers closed frankly on his hand. ‘You feel soft and friendly,’ she said, with the fearless candour of a child. ‘Squeeze me again. I like it!’

The next moment she snatched her hand away from him. The sense of his danger had suddenly forced itself on her mind. ‘If my father sees you,’ she said, ‘he will light the signal-fire at the Temple, and the people from over yonder will come here and put you to death. Where is your canoe? No! It is broad daylight. My father may see you on the water.’ She considered for a moment, and, approaching him, laid her hands on his shoulders. ‘Stay here till nightfall,’ she said. ‘My father never comes this way. The sight of the place where my mother died is horrible to him. You are safe here. Promise to stay here till night-time.’

The captain gave his promise. Freed from anxiety so far, the girl’s mobile southern temperament recovered its native cheerfulness—its sweet gaiety and spirit. She admired the beautiful stranger as she might have admired a new bird that had flown to her to be petted with the rest. She patted his fair white skin, and wished she had a skin like it. She lifted the great glossy folds of her long black hair, and compared it with the captain’s bright, curly locks, and wished she could change colour with him from the bottom of her heart. His dress was a wonder to her. His watch was a new revelation. She rested her head on his shoulder to listen delightedly to the ticking as he held the watch to her ear. Her fragrant breath played on his face, her warm, supple figure rested against him softly. The captain’s arm stole round her waist, and the captain’s lips gently touched hers. She lifted her head with a look of pleased surprise. ‘Thank you,’ said the child of nature simply. ‘Kiss me again; I like it. May I kiss you?’ The tame turtle-dove perched on her shoulder as she gave the captain her first kiss, and diverted her thoughts to the pets that she had left, in pursuit of the truant dove.

Come,’ she said, ‘and see my birds. I keep them on this side of the forest. There is no danger, so long as you don’t show yourself on the other side. My name is Aimata; Aimata will take care of you. Oh, what a beautiful white neck you have!’ She put her arm admiringly round his neck. The captain’s arm held her tenderly to him. Slowly the two descended the cliff, and were lost in the leafy solitudes of the forest. And the tame dove fluttered before them, a winged messenger of love, cooing to his mate.

VI.

THE night had come, and the captain had not left the island. Aimata's resolution to send him away in the darkness was a forgotten resolution already. She had let him persuade her that he was in no danger, so long as he remained in the hut on the cliff; and she had promised, at parting, to return to him, while the Priest was still sleeping, at the dawn of day.

He was alone in the hut. The thought of the innocent creature whom he loved was sorrowfully as well as tenderly present to his mind. He almost regretted his rash visit to the island. 'I will take her with me to England,' he said to himself. 'What do I care for the opinion of the world? Aimata shall be my wife.'

The intense heat oppressed him. He stepped out on the cliff towards midnight, in search of a breath of air. The first shock of earthquake (felt in the ship while she was inside the reef) shook the ground he stood on. He instantly thought of the volcano on the main island. Had he been mistaken in supposing the crater to be extinct? Was the shock of earthquake that he had just felt a warning from the volcano, communicated through a submarine connection between the two islands? He waited and watched through the hours of darkness with a vague sense of apprehension, which was not to be reasoned away. With the first rays of daybreak he descended into the forest, and saw the lovely being whose safety was already precious to him as his own, hurrying to meet him through the trees.

She waved her hand distractedly, as she approached him. 'Go!' she cried; 'go away in your canoe before the island is destroyed!'

He did his best to quiet her alarm. Was it the shock of earthquake that had frightened her? It was not only the shock of earthquake, it was something more ominous still which had followed the shock. There was a lake near the Temple, the waters of which were supposed to be heated by subterranean fires. The lake had risen with the earthquake, had bubbled furiously, and had then melted away in the night. Her father, viewing the portent with horror, had gone to the cape, to watch the volcano on the main island, and to implore, by prayers and sacrifices, the protection of the gods. Hearing this, the captain entreated Aimata to let him see the emptied lake, in the absence of the Priest. She hesitated; but his influence was all-powerful. He prevailed on her to turn back with him through the forest.

Reaching the farthest limit of the trees, they came out upon open, rocky ground that sloped gently downward towards the

centre of the island. Having crossed this space, they arrived at a natural amphitheatre of rock. On one side of it the Temple appeared, partly excavated, partly formed by a natural cavern. In one of the lateral branches of the cavern was the dwelling of the Priest and his daughter. The mouth of it looked out on the rocky basin of the lake. Stooping over the edge of the basin, the captain discovered, far down in the empty depths, a light cloud of steam. Not a drop of water was visible anywhere.

'Does *that* mean nothing?' said Aimata, pointing to the abyss. She shuddered, and hid her face on the captain's bosom. 'My father says,' she whispered, 'that it is *your* doing.'

The captain started. 'Does your father know that I am on the island?'

She looked up at him with a quick glance of reproach. 'Do you think I would tell him, and put your life in peril?' she asked. 'My father felt the destroyer of the island in the earthquake; my father saw the coming destruction in the disappearance of the lake.' Her eyes rested on him with a loving languor. 'Are you indeed the demon of the prophecy?' she said, winding his hair round her finger. 'I am not afraid of you, if you are. I am a girl bewitched; I love the demon.' She kissed him passionately. 'I don't care if I die,' she whispered between the kisses, 'if I only die with you!'

The captain made no attempt to reason with her. He took the wiser way—he appealed to her feelings.

'You will come with me to my own country,' he said. 'My ship is waiting. I will take you home with me, and make you my wife.'

She sprang to her feet, and clapped her hands for joy. Then she thought of her father, and sat down again in tears.

The captain understood her. 'Let us leave this dreary place,' he said. 'We will talk about it in the cool glades of the forest, where you first said you loved me.'

She gave him her hand. 'Where I first said I loved you!' she repeated, smiling tenderly and thoughtfully as she looked at him. They left the lake together.

VII.

THE darkness had fallen again. The ship was still becalmed at sea.

Mr. Duncalf came on deck after his supper. The thin line of smoke, seen rising from the peak of the mountain that evening, was now succeeded by ominous flashes of fire from the same quarter, intermittently visible. The faint, hot breeze from the land

was felt once more. 'There's just an air of wind,' the mate remarked. 'We will try for the captain while we have the chance.'

One of the boats was lowered into the water—under command of the second mate, who had taken the 'bearings' of the tabooed island by daylight. Four of the men were to go with him, and they were all to be well armed. Mr. Duncalf addressed his final instructions to the officer in the boat.

'You will keep a look-out with a lantern in the bows. When you get a-nigh the island, you will fire a gun and sing out for the captain——'

'Quite needless,' interposed a voice from the sea. 'The captain is here!'

Without taking the slightest notice of the astonishment that he had caused, the captain paddled his canoe to the side of the ship. Instead of ascending to the deck of the 'Fortuna,' he stepped into the boat. 'Lend me your pistols,' he said quietly to the second officer, 'and oblige me by taking your men back to their duties on board.' He looked up at Mr. Duncalf, and gave some further directions. 'If there is any change in the weather, keep the ship standing off and on, at a safe distance from the land; and throw up a rocket from time to time to show your position. Expect me on board again by sunrise.'

'What!' cried the mate. 'Do you mean to say you are going back to the island—in that boat—all by yourself?'

'I am going back to the island,' answered the captain, as quietly as ever, 'in this boat—all by myself.' He pushed off from the ship, and hoisted the sail as he spoke.

'You're deserting your duty!' shouted the mate, with one of his loudest oaths.

'Attend to my directions,' the captain shouted back, as he drifted away into the darkness.

Mr. Duncalf—violently agitated for the first time in his life—took leave of his superior officer, with a singular mixture of solemnity and politeness, in these words:

'The Lord have mercy on your soul! I wish you good evening.'

VIII.

ALONE in the boat, the captain looked with a misgiving mind at the flashing of the volcano on the main island.

If events had favoured him, he would have removed Aimata to the shelter of the ship on the day when he saw the emptied basin

of the lake. But the smoke of the Priest's sacrifice had been discovered from the main island ; and the chief had sent two canoes with instructions to make enquiries. One of the canoes had returned ; the other was kept in waiting off the cape, to place a means of communicating with the main island at the disposal of the Priest. The second shock of earthquake had naturally increased the alarm of the chief. He had sent messages to the Priest, entreating him to leave the island. The Priest refused. He believed in his gods and his sacrifices—he believed he might avert the fatality that threatened his sanctuary. Yielding to the holy man, the chief sent reinforcements of canoes to take their turn at keeping watch off the headland. Assisted by torches, the islanders were on the alert (in superstitious terror of the demon of the prophecy) by night as well as by day. The captain would have risked certain death if he had ventured to approach the hiding-place in which he had concealed his canoe. He waited and watched. It was only after Aimata had left him as usual, to return to her father at the close of evening, that the chances declared themselves in the captain's favour. The fire-flashes from the mountain, visible when the night came, had struck terror into the hearts of the men in the canoes. They thought of their wives, their children, and their possessions on the main island, and they one and all deserted their Priest. The captain seized the opportunity of communicating with the ship, and of exchanging a frail canoe, which he was ill able to manage, for a swift sailing-boat, capable of keeping the sea in the event of stormy weather.

As he now neared the land, certain small sparks of red, moving in the distance, informed him that the canoes had been ordered back to their duty. Steering by the distant torchlights, he reached his own side of the island without accident, and, guided by the boat's lantern, anchored under the cliff. He climbed the rocks, advanced to the door of the hut—and was met, to his delight and astonishment, by Aimata on the threshold.

‘I dreamed that the anger of the deities had parted us for ever,’ she said ; ‘and I came here to see if my dream was true. Oh, how I have been crying, all alone in the hut ! Now I have seen you I am satisfied. Kiss me, and let me go back. No, you must not go with me. My father has his doubts ; my father may be out, looking for me. It is you that are in danger, not I. I know the forest as well by dark as by daylight. You shall see me again at daybreak.’

The captain detained her. ‘Now you *are* here,’ he said, ‘why should I wait to place you in safety until daybreak ? I have been

to the ship; I have brought back one of the boats. The darkness will befriend us—let us embark while we can.'

She shrank back as he took her hand. 'My father!' she said, faintly.

'Your father is in no danger. The canoes are waiting at the cape. I saw the lights as I passed.'

With that reply he drew her out of the hut, and turned his face towards the sea. Not a breath of the breeze was now to be felt. The dead calm had returned—and the boat was too large to be easily managed by one man alone at the oars.

'The breeze may come again,' he said to her. 'Wait here, my angel, for the chance.'

As he spoke the deep silence of the forest below them was broken by a sound. A harsh, wailing voice was heard, calling 'Aimata! Aimata!'

'My father!' she whispered; 'he has missed me. If he comes here, you are lost.'

She kissed him with passionate fervour; she held him to her for a moment with all her strength. 'Expect me at daybreak,' she said, and disappeared down the landward slope of the cliff. He listened, anxious for her safety. The voices of the father and daughter just reached him from among the trees. The Priest spoke in no angry tones; she had apparently found an acceptable excuse for her absence. Little by little the failing sound of their voices told him that they were on their way back together to the Temple. The silence fell again. Not a ripple broke on the beach, not a leaf rustled in the forest. Nothing moved but the reflected flashes of the volcano on the black sky over the main island. It was an airless and an awful calm.

He went into the hut, and laid down on his bed of leaves, not to sleep, but to rest. All his energies might be required to meet the coming events of the morning. After the voyage to and from the ship, and the long watching that had preceded it, strong as he was, he stood in need of repose.

For some little time he kept awake, thinking. Insensibly the oppression of the intense heat, aided in its influence by his own fatigue, treacherously closed his eyes. In spite of himself, the weary man fell into a deep sleep.

He was awakened by a roar like the explosion of a park of artillery. The volcano on the main island had burst into a state of eruption. Smoky flame-light overspread the sky, and flashed through the open doorway of the hut. He sprang from his couch—and found himself up to his knees in water.

Had the sea overflowed the land? He waded out of the hut, and

the water rose to his middle. He looked round him by the lurid flame-light of the eruption. The one visible object within his range of view was the roof of the hut. In every other direction the waters of the horrid sea, stained blood-red by the flaming sky, spread swirling and rippling strangely in the dead calm. In a moment more he became conscious that the earth on which he stood was sinking under his feet. The water rose to his neck; the last vestige of the roof of the hut disappeared. He looked round again, and the truth burst on him. The island was sinking—slowly, slowly sinking into volcanic depths, below the utmost depth of the sea! The highest object was the hut, and that had dropped, inch by inch, under water, before his own eyes. Thrown up to the surface by occult volcanic influences, the island had sunk back under the same influences to the obscurity from which it had emerged!

A black, shadowy object, turning in a wide circle, came slowly near him as the all-destroying ocean washed its bitter waters into his mouth. The buoyant boat, rising on the sea as the earth deserted it, had dragged its anchor, and was floating round in the vortex made by the slowly-sinking island. With a last desperate hope that Aimata might have been saved as *he* had been saved, he swam to the boat, seized the heavy oars with the strength of a giant, and made for the place (so far as he could guess at it now) where the lake and the Temple had once been.

He looked round and round him—he strained his eyes in the vain attempt to penetrate below the surface of the seething, dimpling sea. Had the panic-stricken watchers in the canoes deserted their post without an effort to save the father and daughter? Or had they both been suffocated, before they could make an attempt to escape from their cavern? He called to her in his misery, as if she could hear him out of the fathomless depths, ‘Aimata! Aimata!’ The roar of the distant eruption answered him. The mounting fires lit the solitary sea far and near over the sinking island. The boat turned slowly and more slowly in the lessening vortex. Never again would those gentle eyes look at him with unutterable love! Never again would those fresh lips touch *his* lips with their fervent kiss! Alone, amid the mighty forces of Nature in conflict, the miserable mortal lifted his hands in frantic supplication—and the burning sky glared down on him in its pitiless grandeur, and struck him to his knees in the boat. His reason sank with his sinking limbs. In the merciful frenzy that succeeded the shock, he saw her afar off, alive again in her white robe, an angel poised on the waters, beckoning him to follow her to the brighter and the better world. He loosened the sail, he seized the oars, and the faster

he pursued it, the faster the mocking vision fled from him over the empty and endless sea.

IX.

THE boat was discovered the next morning from the ship. All that the devotion of the officers of the 'Fortuna' could do for their unhappy commander was done on the homeward voyage. Restored to his own country, and to skilled medical help, the captain's mind, by slow degrees, recovered its balance. He has taken his place in society again—he lives and moves and manages his affairs like the rest of us. But his heart is dead to all new emotions; nothing lives in it but the sacred remembrance of his last love. He neither courts nor avoids the society of women. Their sympathy finds him grateful, but their attractions seem to be lost on him; they pass from his mind as they pass from his eyes—they stir nothing in him but the memory of Aimata.

'Now you know, ladies, why the captain will never marry, and why (sailor as he is) he hates the sight of the sea.'

Nothing at All.

So many eyes like mine that fill,
Dim for a loved one's face;
So many ears, a breath could thrill,
Sealed in the still, chill space.

So many hearts that beat to greet
Love that will heed no sign;
So many lips that part to meet
Love that is air like mine!

Flood-gates fast of form and sense,
Burst from the soul apart:
Burst! that the clear, deep truth flow hence,
Healthily, heart to heart.

G. L. RAYMOND.

Story-Hunting in the Western Highlands.

BY CUTHBERT BEDE.

IN the southern Argyllshire peninsula of Cantire, as well as in those few other old-world spots in the Western Highlands and Islands, where the language, traditions, and customs of the past have not wholly succumbed to the dominant influences of the present—in such districts as these, neighbours will gather together in some duly-selected house, and there, as they sit around the peat-fire heaped on the earthen floor, will while away the long, dark winter nights by telling legendary tales and reciting Ossianic poems. The storm may be thundering without, the great Atlantic rollers may be rattling almost at the very door; but, within the heather-thatched hut, they are happy and busy, the women spinning and the men knitting, and all, in turn, lightening the hours by song and story.

As Gaelic is the language of the majority, the traditionary tales are told in that tongue. When translated, therefore, they lose much of their original force; but, if they are translated with literal exactness, although the stories are thereby rendered of greater value to the Gaelic scholar, yet, from their copiousness of local peculiarities and allusions, as well as from their ruggedness of diction and idiomatic phrases, a volume of such translations would, probably, not be perused by the average English reader without a considerable effort. On the other hand, when such legends are rendered into prose-poetry—as was done by Macpherson in his ‘Ossian,’ and by Dr. Smith of Campbelton in his ‘Ancient Poems from the Gaelic’—we have another system of translation that has found numerous admirers, since the days when the great Napoleon made Macpherson’s work his favourite volume. A middle course between the free Ossianic and strictly literal styles has been adopted by other translators; so that, in this way, we may meet with at least three varying versions of the same legendary story. Similarly, a landscape, the lineaments of which were depicted on the canvas by the pencils of a Turner, a Linnell, and a Creswick, would assume as many differing styles; and yet the three pictures might faithfully represent the scene, although all three would show numberless divergences and discrepancies when compared with the strictly literal photograph. It must be borne in mind that, to many of the tellers of Gaelic stories, the English language was a sealed tongue; and that, as they could

neither read nor write the Gaelic that they spoke, all their legendary stories were orally delivered from one generation to another, being altered and adapted, pieced, turned, and twisted, according to the memory or fancy of the narrator; so that, in the same Highland district, we may encounter the same Highland legend in half-a-dozen different dresses, and, occasionally, find it to be so patched and cobbled as to be well-nigh metamorphosed out of its original shape.

But, in the majority of cases, any departure from the original story is due to the inventive faculty of the narrator, and not to any deficiency in his memory; for the powers of memory possessed by illiterate West Highlanders are so extraordinary as almost to surpass belief. They will not only repeat hundreds, but (as I have been credibly informed) thousands of lines of poetry, without an error; and will declaim the Ossianic poems much in the same way that the Icelanders repeat their interminable Sagas. Narrators of such stories are quickly dying off; every year there are fewer and fewer to sing the

Battle-chants of bard Oran and Ullin;

and the tellers of the *sgeulachdan*, or popular stories, are rapidly becoming an extinct race, through the pressure of those new creations of the railway era that hunt them in their far-away nooks, and bring them within the realms of tourists, telegrams, daily newspapers, and the English language and fashions. The imagination and inventive faculties of the people are being directed to far more useful purposes than the framing of *sgeulachdan*; and the ministers and 'godly men' who have done their best—or worst, as it is often considered—to frown down these excuses for winter-nights' gossipings have much to say on their side of the question, in affirming that the powers of memory are given to us for better and higher purposes than the treasuring of silly fables and old wives' tales, which tend to no increase of intellect, religion, or morality, but rather denote a state of stagnation both social and intellectual. Such objectors have remorselessly consigned the national legends to the Hades of 'fairs, dances, and worldly revelings.'

Yet, although it must be conceded that there are higher and worthier efforts of the mind than those exercised by the retention or in the dissemination of popular folk-lore and fairy tales, still the preservation of these evidences of the mental amusements of a people during many centuries cannot be altogether without its use or interest. Nurtured under the influences of a country like to that described by the poet of 'The Excursion,' where

. many a tale
 Traditionary round the mountains hung,
 And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,
 Nourished Imagination in her growth,

the men of the wild Western Highlands and Islands grew up to be the memory-keepers of Ossianic songs and ancient legends; and these traditionary tales, whether as relics of a dead and buried past, or as lingering specimens of a transition era, are intensely interesting, as evidences of a thoroughly Celtic race that is fast losing many of its distinguishing characteristics. From the *Seánachas na Feine* and Fingalian lore, through all the misty and distorted traditions of the intermediate periods—from the commingling of Norse and Celtic myths, up to the already semi-fabulous popular stories of the last century—all these are illustrations of the oral entertainment of thousands, through successive generations, in days when the schoolmaster was quite abroad, and Education Acts were unknown. Those tales and legends represent, in fact, the literature of a people; and, as such, are worthy to be snatched from oblivion.

How to get them is the difficulty. It is obvious that, unless the hearer of a Gaelic-spoken story can at the time of its narration note it down, word for word, with stenographic fidelity, he must depend upon his own powers of memory for reproducing, in an English version, the tale that has been told to him in Gaelic. And it is further obvious that when a Gaelic legend is thus filtered through an English medium, it cannot be reproduced, as a whole, with literal exactness, although the more prominent verbal phrases and idiomatic expressions may have remained in the hearer's memory. Yet it is quite possible to preserve the sense and spirit of a story together with its continuity and homogeneousness. The work of story-hunting in a Western Highland district is by no means easy, and demands the exercise of peculiar abilities. A knowledge of spoken Gaelic and its various dialects is not sufficient for the acquisition of orally-delivered legendary tales; but he who desires to listen to the narration of such stories must first possess the key to the Highlander's heart, and use it with tact and kindness for the attainment of his purpose. An utter stranger who helplessly wandered about story-hunting would meet with scornful wonderment, stolid silence, or assumed ignorance from cute West Highlanders, who, if they were so disposed, could load him with a budget of traditionary tales. But let another person visit such memory-keepers of old lore, and, by clanship or any other magic wand, tap the full cask of their recollections, and forthwith such a stream of talk will begin to flow that the visitor'

chief difficulty will be to know how or when to stop the out-pouring.

The old retainers of the old families—characters that seem to be indigenous to the soil—are very storehouses of legendary lore—

Enough to furnish tales for every night,
The whole long winter, by the peat-fire's light.

And they are not the only tale-tellers and reciters who are considered to be 'good at *sgeulachdan*.' The vagrants and beggars were specially remarkable as being holders and diffusers of popular stories. Utterly different in their character from the 'vagrom men' who beg from door to door in England, these Western Highland mendicants are rather to be looked upon as a peculiar class of traders—'wandering minstrels'—who fairly earned their board and lodging by the exercise of their special talents. Making easy progress from one farm-town to another, with their bagpipes, fiddle, or Lochaber trumps as their badge of trade, they everywhere received a hearty welcome and the best entertainment, in return for the music that they played, the stories that they told, and the budget of news and gossip that they freely opened. They were peripatetic newspapers that brought tidings of the outer world, and conveyed local information to fresh circles of pleased hearers. The households on which they quartered themselves were regarded with envy; and the shining rafters of the peat-reeked roof would vibrate to the reels, and jigs, and strathspeys, danced by the barefooted lads and lasses on the earthen floor to the inspiring music that the beggar—the lion of the night—blew from his pipes, or scraped from his fiddle, or breathed from his Lochaber trumps, otherwise known to Southrons as the Jews' (*i.e.* jaws) harp. And when, in the pauses of the dance, they gathered round the peat-fire, it was the wandering beggar who could open his Ossianic wallet, and thrill his hearers to the very marrow with stories of ghosts, and warlocks, and brownies, and water-kelpies, told with dramatic power and an actor's art. In the long winter nights, more especially, a good teller of stories was invested with a local popularity that cannot be adequately realised by the modern Englishman, who subscribes to *Mudie's* and regularly reads his 'Times;' and the story-tellers who had fixed habitations were glad to increase their stores by the new importations of the vagrants. So sure of a welcome were they during the winter seasons, that it is said four months would be consumed by a vagrant in his progress of twenty miles through the Mull of Cantire, from Balligrogan to Southend—that lovely 'garden of Cantire' which is annually visited by the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, and the Marquess of Lorne and his Princess wife. And not

only was the vagrant thus warmly welcomed, but, partly from a like cause, a stranger received that hospitality which the warm-hearted West Highlander ever shows to a guest; and the neighbours, at the news of his arrival, would flock to the house in which he was lodged, in order to hear some novelty in the shape of story or anecdote. The common rule, according to a Cantire proverb, was a very simple one, although it pressed somewhat hardly upon a reticent, bashful, or unimagined stranger: '*A chiod sgeul air fear an taigh agus sgeul air muinn sgeoil air a Choigreach gu lá*: The first story on the man of the house, and story after story on the stranger, till day.'

The language in which these stories were told possessed great flexibility for the dramatic narrator, and frequently enabled him to give the sense of a passage by the mere sounds of the spoken words. This may be exemplified in the Gaelic song—'The Swan's Ditty,' concerning which it may be remarked that the classical tradition of the song of the swan is accepted by the Cantire Highlanders, who affirm that the wild swans that frequently visit their peninsula in the winter, and which are specifically different from the tame, emit some very melodious notes on certain occasions, particularly when two flocks meet, or when they are about to take their flight. Usually, the wild swans, when they are seen in Cantire, are not in flocks, but in twos and threes; but in January, 1864, as many as thirty wild swans were observed at the curling-pond at the Dhury-loch, between Campbelton and Kilkenzie, and they kept together for many days. The swan's note has, in the Gaelic, a particular name, which would not readily be the case if the thing had not a foundation in nature; and both the words and air of the song called 'The Swan's Ditty,' *Luineag na h Ealui*, are in close imitation of the bird's notes. It would scarcely be possible to give the air, even with the aid of printed music; but the words may be judged from the following specimen verse of the song as it is sung in Cantire, and as it was given to me by one of its Gaelic singers:

Gui' eug-i, Gui' eug-o,
Sgeula mo dhumach
Gui' eug-i,
Rinn mo leire'
Gui' eug-o,
Mo chasan dubh
Gui' eug-i,
'Smi fein gle' gheal
Gui' eug-o.

Even the reader who 'has no Gaelic' can see, at a glance, that this Ditty rivals the Aristophanic frog-song. But Gaelic is

remarkable for the ease with which its sounds may be made to echo the sense. The diphthong *ao*, and the triphthong *aoi*, have a peculiarly soft and mournful sound, and are used with great effect in poems and songs. In the mournful passages, the predominant sounds are these, together with *ai*, *iu*, *ua*, *uai*, &c. Soft and tender passions and objects are also expressed by words that bear some analogy to them in sound, and which consist, mainly, of vowels; while harsh objects are denoted by harsh sounds, in which consonants predominate, although many consonants are quiescent in Gaelic. The sound of the hoarse roaring of a wave on a rock is, for example, signified by the prominent use of the letter *r*; thus—

. . . stairirich
Measg charraige cruaidh a garraich.

In the imitative language of the Indians, the same thing is expressed by the words 'mah-dwa-yaush-kak;' and Professor Wilson, in his 'Prehistoric Man' (vol. i. chap. iii.), has given many similar examples from the vocabulary of the Indians and Egyptians.

West Highlanders may be pardoned for asserting that no language was ever better adapted for poetry than the Gaelic, almost all its words being not only energetical and descriptive of the objects that they represent, but also, for the most part, an echo to the sound. A knowledge of Gaelic, both spoken and written—despite its being in Roman characters—still exists, not only throughout the Western Highlands and Islands, but also among many families of the Scottish nobility, and, it is said, among the members of the royal family, whose Highland homes have brought them so continually in contact with the Gaelic-speaking people. Goodly additions have been made to Gaelic literature; but some Celtic philologists and scholars have confessed that the spoken language is in its decadence, with no hope of a revival to its widespread power. On the other hand, it has been stated that, at the present day, the various branches of the Celtic language are spoken by upwards of four millions of people in the Old and New Worlds. The efforts made to establish and endow a Chair of Celtic Language and Literature in the University of Edinburgh may be taken as a proof that it is deemed necessary to acquire a knowledge of Gaelic, as a language that is imperatively needful for a proper study of Celtic literature, history, and philology. It may possibly be doomed, as a widely-spread spoken and living language, to be classed among the things that have been, when some two or three generations shall have passed away. But, at present, it cleaves with tenacity to its native soil, especially in such districts as that of southern Argyllshire. Lowland immigrants

and English sportsmen may be gradually overpowering it; but a Gaelic service is still a necessity for the Sabbath worshipper; and it would seem also, from a notice that I saw the other day—‘Wanted, a Boy, for a Shop in Town, able to speak the Gaelic language’—that many of those who come to ‘Town’—that is, to Campbelton—to do their marketing and purchase necessities, can only do so through the medium of a Gaelic-speaking interpreter. Most certainly, a knowledge of spoken Gaelic is required by any philological or folk-lore sportsman who intends to go story-hunting in the Western Highlands, and wishes to fill his bag with those *ur-sgeuls* and popular traditions in which the natives take so much delight—

. . . . tales
To tell beside the red peat-fire,
When the scant winter daylight fails
And the bairns gather round their sire.

A School-Board Lyric.

SHAME on the knave and coward slave,
The paltry swindler and the shirk,
Who'd rather let his infants toil
Than do his own appointed work!
Who'd keep the little ones from school
To earn the pence which he should win,
That he may spend them on himself,
And on his dastard beer and gin.

Shame on him! not one half a man!
Too self-degraded not to see
That misery, disgrace, and crime
Proceed from creatures such as he;
That every father owes his child,
That never asked him to be born,
The education of the mind
As well as sustenance of corn.

Were England filled with men like these,
The day of England's power were fled,
And hopeless statesmen might deplore
The glory past, the virtue dead.
But no! ah no! it is not so,
Our people are not knaves or fools;
They'll do their work with hand and heart,
And send their children to the schools.

CHARLES MACKAY.

The World Well Lost.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

He who for love has undergone
The worst that can befall,
Is happier thousandfold than one
Who never loved at all;
A grace within his soul has reigned
Which nothing else can bring—
Thank God for all that I have found
By such high suffering!

CHAPTER I.

MRS. SMITH OF OWLETT.

THOUGH she had come without introductions and lived without friendships, few people were more respected at Grantley Bourne than Mrs. Smith of Owlett. Look at her character and conduct in what light you would, each was absolutely without flaw; and slander itself would have been hard put to it to find the undefended tract wherein to strike its sting. She lived well, as became a woman, say of fifteen hundred a year; but she lived with as little vulgar ostentation as sordid stint. If her establishment was simple it was of notable refinement, and she was both liberal in her appointments and punctual in her payments. Her place was considered to be the place *par excellence* by the local army of grumbling martyrs who had dedicated themselves to domestic service; and though she kept no men-servants withindoors, her women were peaceful and contented, and generally stayed with her till they married. She subscribed generously to the local charities, but not so generously as to outshine her autochthonous neighbours; which would have been censurable in a new-comer and a mark of bad taste and defective breeding; and the clergyman and doctor could always count on her private aid when they went to her with their lists of misery and sickness, which money could remove and good food and wine alleviate.

Though lovely when she came, fourteen years ago, and handsome still for all her forty years and iron-grey hair, no one could accuse her of even the appearance of an indiscretion, not even though she had had her only boy educated at home under a non-resident tutor; and with every man in Grantley Bourne to chant her praises, there was not a woman to sound a discordant note of blame. This was only justice; for she was singularly free in her

own life from the vice of evil-speaking. Not a scandalous report could be traced to her as conduit or fountain-head; and no one had ever heard her prove her Christian charity and good feeling by decrying humanity in the abstract, or hounding down the sins of her neighbours in the concrete. She went to church regularly every Sunday morning, whether it rained or shone, and she performed all her other religious duties with perfect propriety and punctuality, but without excess; but she did not attend the missionary meetings or the school-feasts, any more than the local lectures or the cottage flower-shows which occasionally broke through the deadness of life at Grantley Bourne and threw a washy kind of rainbow across its dull grey sky. She contented herself with sending her guineas and her children; but for herself she kept apart.

She never left home on any plea of business, change of air, paying visits to distant relatives, or the like. She had not been absent for a day, nor slept away for one night, since she first established herself at Owlett; and she was as unsociable in her habits as restricted in her area. She gave no parties and went to none; and though the people of the place called on her frequently, and brought her all the local news and latest gossip, because she was beautiful, interesting, a mystery—and safe—she rarely paid back a return visit; not oftener than once in a year or eighteen months; and no one could remember to have been greeted with ‘I am glad to see you,’ or dismissed with ‘I hope I shall see you again soon.’ It was but rational to believe that she had some good reason for this extraordinary reserve, which was not pride nor affectation, nor yet that assumption of superiority known as giving oneself airs. If she had, she did not give it. She never said that it was on account of her health or her principles, for this or for that. She simply declined all invitations whatsoever and gave none on her own side; and left the world to form its own conclusions why.

She occupied herself chiefly with her two children, whom she had educated with care under her own eyes; and she kept them as much as she could, without cruelty, from making friends on their own account with the children of the families about. She was not able wholly to prevent all intercourse, as witness the youthful familiarity between them and the Machells; but she did her best, and counted all ground gained as so much sorrow saved. As time went on however, and the little children grew into girlhood and young manhood, it became more difficult to keep them thus apart from the neighbours; she had no reason to give why she did not wish them to mix with people of character and position, every

way as good as their own, and she had to conceal from them that she did not wish it; so by degrees it came about that the barriers were somewhat enlarged for Derwent and Muriel, and while she still remained close at home, the brother and sister went more abroad.

She was not a widow; and the children, when they first came, spoke often of dear dear papa—good papa—nice papa—who had gone away, they did not quite know where; but Derwent, who was then seven, thought it might be to Japan, and Muriel, who was five, nodded her sunny head in vehement attestation, and said: ‘Yes, it was Japan—nurse said it was!’

Years passed, but Mrs. Smith told her children as little as she told the world what had become of that fair-faced, kindly, sweet-tempered papa of theirs, whom they remembered as if he had been a prince in a fairy-tale, coming home in the evening laden with toys and good things, and giving each as many kisses as there were days in the month. She used to hear from him about twice in the year; but he only said that he was well, or had been ill; that he sent his best love to dear old Derwent, who was to be sure and learn to ride well, and to stick to his Greek and Latin, and a thousand kisses to his sweet little Muriel, God bless her! And she gave no further particulars. For the last four or five years she had not heard at all, but she knew that he was well, she said, when the children questioned her; and she always promised them that he would come home some day. There were a great many photographs about the house of that handsome, bright, and kindly face, with its patent vanity and as patent weakness running like a tarnished thread through the gold of the generosity, the kindness, the affectionateness, the sweetness, which were also just as patent. But there were none where the world could see them. They were all in closed frames in the upstairs rooms; each frame stamped with the family crest and motto; and the children were taught to hold them as too sacred to be shown. These portraits formed part of a certain domestic religion which went on in his name; and papa was ever spoken of to them by their mother in terms of the most tender reverence, the most affectionate respect; and sometimes as a victim suffering for the sins of others.

The family had lived in London before they came to Grantley Bourne, but Mrs. Smith never gave the exact address. It had been at Kensington, vaguely; but Kensington is a wide district, and that intimation could scarcely be called precise. Still, there was more the air of reticence than of mystery in all this; and as Mrs. Smith made no friendships, she could scarcely be expected to give confidences. She had lived at Grantley Bourne, which

was a quiet little dead-alive place in the Midland Counties, for fourteen years, when this story opens; and as, during that time, not a human being had found occasion to fling a stone against her, though she had been watched with vigilance and had there been the chance would have been condemned without mercy, if she chose to live without friends and to give no confidences, to withdraw from society and devote herself to her children, this was not necessarily because she had any disgraceful secret to conceal. It is hard to credit an absolutely blameless woman with hypothetical sins after fourteen years of modest charities, domestic retirement, and practical inoffensiveness all round; and as the Vicar of the place, the Rev. John Oliphant, had said from the first that he believed her to be exactly what she appeared to be—a perfectly respectable and worthy lady—and as the Rev. John Oliphant was a man greatly esteemed by his parishioners, as a peaceful Christ-like man naturally would be, although perhaps somewhat ranting in that organised spirit of suspicion called knowledge of the world, his verdict carried the weight that it deserved to have, and Mrs. Smith was duly recognised and labelled, and admitted, so far as she would accept admittance, into the society of the place.

Sir Gilbert and Lady Machell of Machells called on her; old Mrs. Perceval of the Manor called, and since her death her son Guy Perceval was often over at Owlett; the two Misses Forbes of Tower—Dinah and Aurora—called; so did the Constantines from Sharpeley; so did the Brown de Paumelles, so soon as they had installed themselves at Paumelle House; and so of course did that bustling, active, keenly professional pair, Dr. Christopher Lucraft and his wife. These were the chief elements of which the immediate society was composed; and among all these families there was not one which set itself at cross-corners with the new Mrs. Smith of Owlett, or imagined that it was due to any fault of hers that her husband was in Japan while she was in Grantley Bourne.

The severest surmise ever broached was that he had run away with another woman, and that she had refrained from getting a divorce for the sake of the children; but many supposed, more charitably, that he had an appointment somewhere in an unhealthy climate, and that she had felt it her duty to stay at home with her little ones. By degrees conjecture concerning the personality and whereabouts of this unknown Mr. Smith wore itself threadbare; and by sheer want of any solid point of contact the fact of there being a Mr. Smith at all dropped out of public holding altogether, and drifted into the distance as a tradition which every one accepted and no one attempted to verify.

There were many finer places, but no prettier residence, than Owlett in the whole district of Grantley Bourne. It was the perfection, indeed, of an English house of that kind which no one would raise to the dignity of a mansion or dwarf to the humility of a cottage. The rooms were not too large to be homelike and not so small as to be confined; the garden was not magnificent, but it was spacious and richly stocked; and, what with the care that it received and the sunny slope on which it stood, was always a fortnight in advance of every other in the neighbourhood. Machells, denuded as it had been by successive generations of spendthrifts till now it was the mere shell of a former fine estate, had still left to it a few ancestral oaks and elms and a broad stretch of lordly park, the like of which was nowhere else to be found. The Manor had a banqueting-hall and embayed windows, fountains and fishponds, 'pleached alleys,' and long straight grassy walks, and the most charming old red-brick walls where the peaches and nectarines grew like blackberries—all as befitted a Queen Anne house of the best fashion. Paumelle House, that brand-new stuccoed barrack with its forty bedrooms and lavish gilding, which the successful soap-boiler had built out of his gains; and where there were acres of 'glass' under which everything that could be grown was grown: these, the show places of the immediate neighbourhood, had each its own special charms; but for sweet, quiet English living, the sunny garden and picturesque house of Owlett were supreme.

Perhaps a hygeist would have objected to that high wall covered with ferns and mosses to the north, which held up the steep bank crowded with flowering shrubs and the lighter kind of forest trees, in that it checked the free circulation of air and made it too heavily sweet with the resinous odours of pine and fir and the mingled perfumes of mould, moss, and flower; to the trees that stood close round on every side, leaving only an open vista down the valley to the south; to the ivy and large-leaved 'elephant-creeper,' threaded through with roses and jasmine and clematis and honeysuckle, that grew over the house till not an inch of brickwork was visible. But if the hygeist would have held up his hands with an axe in them, the artist would have thanked the Lord by making Owlett the *motif* of pictures which he would have sold handsomely at the private view.

It would have been too discordant if a place so beautiful had been tenanted by unlovely people, if the birds had not been worthy of the bower. Take the Brown de Paumelles for one instance; would they have suited this sweet quiet English home, so refined and yet so simple, so pretty and yet so modest? He—short, stout,

rubicund, shining: Brown by the truth of his parentage, de Paumelle from a small *terre* which he had bought somewhere in the Landes of Normandy for the sake of the title that went along with it—carrying ever about with him the sense of his present wealth and the reminiscence of his past calling, whose triple estimate of value was weight, size, price—what would he have cared for beauty that would not have fetched more than a beggarly five or six thousand pounds at the utmost in the market? And she—that timid, awkward, plain-faced little woman, with her high cheek bones and dust-coloured hair, who had withered under the weight of their acquired grandeur, not swollen to the size of their enlarged groove as he had done—how would she have looked as a picture standing framed in that flowery porch where Mrs. Smith so often stood looking down the valley that trended away to the south, watching, watching with those beautiful eyes of hers that were as sad as they were beautiful? She would have been no fit *châtelaine* for Owlett. Nor would their daughter Jemima, the mother retranslated—meagre, timid, colourless too, and with a curiously faded air for one so young, as if she had ‘wilted’ rather than ripened under the warmer sun and more generous treatment of their present, as if she had gone back upon the years when the Browns were but day-labourers, badly housed and worse fed, whose blood was half water and whose brains were not thoroughly vitalised, and who had not died of their misery and want, as a proof of the amount of attenuation of which humanity is capable when tried. She, good and harmless as she was, would not have been the fitting *genius loci*, the natural nymph of the place, as she carried her poor little starved personality with prim decorum, conscientiously doing so many hours of exercise in and out the shrubby walks, where the lilacs flung out their rich scents and the laburnums dropped their golden blossoms, where primroses and sweet wood-flowers grew in a carpet for the happy feet that now ran lightly over the short smooth moss. Had they been there—he with his rampant vulgarity and flashy magnificence; they, the women, with their timidity and unlovely poverty of nature—they would have been as much out of place—well, as they were now at Paumelle House though in a different way.

Things would have been no better with those hard, stiff, monumental Constantines of Sharpeley, for another instance; those types of the British Philistine unredeemed by one touch of poetry, one living spark of imagination; people who made war against the superfluous and had a dread of art and beauty as enervating to the intellect and leading weak souls to unknown dangers; people who made of life a tyranny and of virtue a rod whereby to

smite the bystanders. Had they lived in Owlett they would have torn down the creepers on account of the insects which they harboured and the dead leaves which they scattered; they would have had the blackbirds shot because of the cherries, and all the little finches because of the peas; they would have caught the butterflies and moths that there might be no caterpillars next year; and they would have destroyed the big brown humble-bees because they make bad gardeners for those who love to be precise, and mix the colours of the flowers. No! those stiff monumental Constantines of Sharpeley would have been no more harmonious to Owlett than the Brown de Paumelles; and had they lived here they would have robbed the place of all its beauty, all its distinction.

Take the two Misses Forbes again. Miss Dinah, like a grenadier in disguise, standing five feet ten, with a deep voice like a man's, and something that had long ceased to be down on her upper lip; Miss Aurora, at forty-five, and five years her sister's junior, full of the pretty coquetries, the sweet young playful artlessnesses of eighteen—as was indeed but natural to a creature called Baby still by her stalwart sister, and treated as a radiant thing just out of short frocks who had to be kept out of harm's way and protected, in spite of herself, against those doubtful lights which attract both moths and maidens to their ruin. What would they have done at Owlett? Miss Dinah would have bred shorthorns in one part of the grounds and Miss Aurora would have put up lawn tennis and a toy tent in the other, where she would have sat in white muslin and pink ribbons and have served out tea in cups with butterfly handles and significant meanings, after she had skipped about with her racket, shaking her streaming curls and laughing shrilly at miss or hit alike. Upon which Miss Dinah would have appeared with her linsey-woolsey petticoats cut clear above her hobnailed boots, her arms full of cabbages for her cows, and her sonorous voice calling out to the radiant thing in muslin:

‘Well, Baby! what’s the score now?’

To which Baby would have been sure to answer:

‘Love all!’ with a gush of rippling laughter, called by the profane by another phrase.

No! this pretty sheltered harmonious bower was not for the Misses Forbes any more than for the Brown de Paumelles or the Constantines.

If even good Mr. Oliphant had lived here, sweet-natured, pure, and simple-hearted as he was, he would have been as much out of place as the rest. Never knowing what went on about him so long as he was left in his study undisturbed and his papers were not touched nor his books removed, his thrifty bustling old house-

keeper, Mrs. George, might have hung up the week's wash on the lawn and he would not have even seen the lines; and before twenty-four hours had passed the whole of his hens would have been squatting among the verbena and mignonette.

If Mr. Perceval had been there he would have cut down the ornamental trees in the shrubberies, to plant in their stead pines and blue gums for health; he would have levelled the bank for air, and have straightened every winding way; he would have dug up the flowers and have planted all manner of herbs for useful distillation; and he would have put up an observatory on the roof as he had done at the Manor. All highly useful and creditable things in their way, but not suited to Owlett.

The Machells would have let the lawn go to grass, and would have cultivated only hardy perennials which wanted no gardener beyond a lad to give a day here and there of weeding and hoeing. And then my lady would have said, with that smooth air of hers which so heroically made the best of a bad business, that she disliked the present style of ribbon gardening and masses of one kind in a bed alone, edged round by a few sickly-looking leaves, and that she loved only the dear old-fashioned methods and growths. But her love, poor soul, would have been born of her poverty and high standing, which made life such a dreadful muddle and compromise at the grand old place which had once been the residence of minor kings and was now the refuge of practical bankrupts.

As for the Lucrafts, their ten noisy, ill-conducted children would have wrecked the place in a few hours, and all the loving care with which the house and grounds had been planned and kept by the former owner's dead wife, and with which they were kept still, would have been destroyed beyond redemption. No! Owlett, with its pretty fancies of arched trees and winding walks, of turfed seats and trellised arbours, its delicate growths set in the sunniest places, and its flowers of greatest fragrance nearest to the windows of the house—sweet and dreamy Owlett would have been desecrated by the tenancy of any of these; but Mrs. Smith, beautiful, quiet, fond of beauty, refined, and her son and daughter, beautiful, quiet, fond of beauty, and refined like herself, were, as all the world said, the very people for it. And there is a spirit in places as well as in persons, and one which demands as much harmoniousness of circumstance and use.

Standing away from the main road and hidden among its trees, Owlett was not an easy place to find for those who did not know the local map by heart. It stood full half a mile up a lane which led to nothing but itself; and which then, from a carriage road, narrowed abruptly into a mere grass-grown occupation path, that

finally lost itself on the hillside behind. But though it stood thus apart and concealed, Owlett was full open to the sunny south and looked along the whole length of the valley to where the soft green hills sunk into the luxuriant plain of farms and fields, where were belts of copsewood for the game and groups of finer forest trees for the birds; where pretty English villages with their peaceful churchyards slept in the sun, and the lordly mansions stood as centres of grandeur round which these minor atoms clustered; where no industry save that of agriculture made its gold out of ugly utility, but where all was quietness and beauty, and where there were as few disturbing passions as exciting events.

The absolute quiet and retirement of Owlett, standing as it did out of the line of travel and as a spectator rather than an integral part of the landscape, suited one whose life was evidently withdrawn intentionally from the world, but who also had the artist's passionate love of beauty, and as passionate sense of enjoyment. View and garden, background and accessories, all were perfect of their kind; and the pretty woman who lived among her flowers, like that Eve in the Eden who tended the Sensitive Plant, was the fit spirit of the place, so gentle, so unobtrusive, so reticent was she, keeping what secret there might be in her life as carefully as her house kept the secret of its existence from the world without, but never parting with her beauty, her sweet womanliness, her grace.

To judge by the outsides of things there could not have been a happier life than that led by Mrs. Smith of Owlett; always supposing that her unshared solitude, her unbroken retirement, was a matter of choice, and that it was by her own wish, uninfluenced by circumstances, that she neither invited visitors nor accepted invitations, never left home, made no excursions, nor even drove beyond a certain point, and lived this close and claustral existence which had almost passed into a proverb in the place.

What did she lack? She had sufficient wealth for need and superfluity alike. Though not notably robust, she was never ailing, and Dr. Christopher Lucraft had found both her and hers but unprofitable patients since she came to Owlett, and scarcely worth the trouble of courting. She had two handsome, well-principled, admirable young people for her pride and her companions, her hope and her support, and she was respected by every one who knew her. The world, which never looks deeper than the surface when the under-current has no dramatic interest whereby it may be amused, which does not care for sorrow unless it be sorrow that has a history—sorrow that might reveal a tragedy which would astound the explorers if only they could come to the true heart of it—after the first few years ceased to trouble itself about Mrs. Smith's biogra-

phical possibilities, and contented itself with supposing her to be as happy as any one else, because she wore no placard, gave no sign through tears, complaints, or confidence, that the once fragrant garden of her life was now a desert, and that her day of warmth and joy had passed into the endless night of cold and sunless regret. As with some others who smile back into the eyes of those who smile on them, and keep their foxes so well hidden that the bystanders hear no echo of the stifled moan, so did Mrs. Smith keep her sorrow so carefully concealed that not even her own children knew what she suffered, or suspected, indeed, that she suffered at all.

But those who had known her in the old days when she lived at Kensington, and before she came to Grantley Bourne, might perhaps have guessed that all this seeming charm of life, this quietness which looked the very perfection of content, must perforce have another reading, when they remembered her as she was then and saw her as she was now.

As she was then :—In one of the most charming of the smaller houses in that favourite locality which the wealthy middle class has made its own—a house furnished and arranged with three times the cost and luxury of Owlett, if scarcely with better taste—a house which was the centre of its own circle, where strangers longed to be received, and of which the *habitués* were proud of their standing; the whole of the current gaiety of London at the feet of the beautiful young wife of the rich city merchant, for whose pleasure her husband spared no expense, and whose happiness was his main thought; that husband the junior partner of an old-established firm, the name of which was held to be as safe and honourable as the Bank itself—handsome, young, fond and faithful; two children beautiful as Italian *amorini* :—where was the speck on this exquisite fruitage of fortune? the canker in this fragrant flower of a smiling fate? Who can tell? Only this—that it all faded away in a night, and was as if it had never been.

One evening, as the husband and wife were alone at dinner—strangely enough this evening alone, before going to the Opera—with the little children in the room as their happiness before bedtime, and their mother dressed in that well-remembered dress of hers which became her so well—the black velvet with the dark crimson lines about the edges, and the pomegranate flowers in her hair; a—friend—came to the house, who took Mr. Smith away with him in a cab, never to return.

Soon after this the house and effects were sold privately, and Mrs. Smith came down to Grantley Bourne, where her husband's uncle Louis, the head of the firm, bought Owlett for her occupation,

and kept her there on about fifteen hundred a year. Since that evening she had not seen her husband face to face or alone, and for the last fourteen years she had not seen him at all.

And now, comparing her position then and her position now, the circumstances by which she was surrounded then and those wherein she stood now, would those who knew her then have said that her life now was as happy as, judging by outside circumstances, it seems as if it ought to be—as if indeed it must be? Scarcely. A woman does not suddenly lose out of her life a husband whom she adores, and by whom she is adored, and not feel the sorrow of her widowhood; she does not suddenly abandon a circle of favourite friends and congenial companions, and not feel the dreariness of her solitude. But if she has, as Mrs. Smith had, constancy and courage, she can keep the temple of her mourning sacred from prying eyes, intrusive feet; and, carrying about with her the pale hope of a lustreless to-morrow, she can wait in silence for the future. The future. Yes, this was the keynote of her life. It was just waiting—waiting—for the present to pass; and then—the future.

CHAPTER II.

‘DREAD SHAME.’

THE day was warm and fresh, full of sweet scents and luminous shadows; full too of that indescribable buoyancy and unshaped hope belonging to the early days of spring, which seem the earnest of some rare happiness to come; one does not know what, but surely of some!—surely days not to fall like unset blossoms fruitless from the tree!

Mrs. Smith was sitting between her two children on the garden seat beneath the tulip-tree on the lawn, knitting diligently in coloured silks. For this was one of her characteristics—she was never unoccupied. But that she was so still and self-controlled, people might have thought her industry feverish—taken as a charm to banish thought, rather than the spontaneous expression of an active mind and energetic temperament. The cause being what it might, the fact stood the same; and Mrs. Smith’s industry was the theme of many eulogies. Her beautiful needlework of all kinds, her exquisite sketches and charming music—these last displayed so seldom as to have become almost traditional, and magnified accordingly—were counted to her as virtues equal in moral importance to her charities and in personal grace to her perfect carriage and handsome eyes. Her needlework especially scored high for her in the estimation of her neighbours, and did

more to propitiate the women in her favour than anything else that she did or was. Fine linen and cambric muslin are so eminently respectable! No woman can be doubtful whose hems are laid by a thread and whose stitching is as even as a row of seed pearls. And as Mrs. Smith's plain needlework was as perfect as her artistic, her darning as beautiful as her embroidery, the opinions which she gained on that head were of pure gold and their value carried on to the other accounts.

Fourteen years ago she had been supremely lovely; and even now she was handsomer than many titular beauties in their prime. She was a woman of middle height and size, with a dead white skin like the petal of a magnolia, set off by large dark lustrous eyes which had something in them so deep and still as to be almost oppressive, something that made them look like sentinels always watching and on guard. Her abundant hair, which had been coal-black, was now an iron-grey, looking at a distance as if slightly powdered, and worn in the fashion of *La Pompadour*; her eyebrows were as level as if they had been ruled with a pencil; her forehead was low and broad; her nose high and finely shaped, with transparent nostrils that quivered easily; and her lips were thin, compressed, and firm. Her pale still face rarely lightened by a smile, and then by one how sad! never breaking into mirth, never darkened by ill-humour, was rather a mask than a face, save for those dilating nostrils which seemed to speak of a more eager and sensitive nature than that which she allowed to appear; but she was noticeably gentle in speech and manner, and, if reticent and reserved, neither hard nor unkind. In action she was pitiful, if sparing in word; and no one who came to her with a tale of distress or the appearance of misfortune ever left her unsoothed or empty-handed. But she said little; and if sometimes her fixed dark eyes looked as if tears might be stealing over them, her voice never quivered, and she was never known to allow herself the luxury of a woman's emotional sympathy.

Her children loved her with passion a little tempered with awe. She was a kind of goddess to them, whom they adored without approaching too near—a divinity at whose feet they knelt rather than a mother in whose arms they lay. And this because, good and true and devoted to them as she was, she held herself substantially as much apart from them as from the world. As has been said, what there was of sorrow or secrecy in her life she kept absolutely to herself, and admitted them to no participation—not though both now were of an age to be initiated into the realities of their family life. The consequence had naturally been to throw Derwent and Muriel into still stricter companionship to-

gether, and to make their love for each other stronger and deeper than the ordinary love of brother and sister.

Of the two, Derwent was tall, dark, reticent, like his mother, proud too, like her, and as tenacious; with a dash of the father's vanity shot through the untried self-confidence of his youth—as was not surprising in a clever lad who has been educated at home; who is adored by his sister and treated with courtesy by his mother; who, if not quite the master of the house, is at all events the acting lieutenant and master in his degree till the rightful owner appears; who, so far as he knows, is at the top form in everything, never having measured himself with a rival, consequently never having found his level; and who knows no reason why he should not hold up his head with the best, and despise all who are not of the bluest blood and most stainless honour, as befits one with a name above reproach and a family history beyond suspicion.

Muriel, on the contrary, was like her father, with fair hair and a blush-rose face, large limpid grey-blue eyes, and a fresh mouth, fuller and softer than her mother's if with more firmness than her father's had. As she sat there by her mother's side, a piece of embroidery in her long fair hands, her face shaded by her broad-brimmed hat and her slight figure outlined to perfection in her close-fitting cream-coloured dress, with the dark-red ribbon at her throat, and the flowers in her breast, she was the ideal of an English girl of that kind which in youth demands nothing but books and flowers, home peace and family love, the sunshine in the summer and the crisp clear frost in the winter for its perfect happiness; but which has the potentialities of a womanhood strong, if always sweet, capable of quiet self-sacrifice if not of showy deeds of dramatic daring—a womanhood infinitely loving, infinitely pitiful, but with affections not passions, and whose convictions would be the result of sentiment and reverence, of love and the 'right thing,' rather than of logic against feeling. With dignity, but knowing nothing of the ordinary woman's instinct for petty tyranny, she was one whom those given to her command would love but never approach with that familiarity which breaks down into contempt. Sensitive to beauty and alive to the grandeur of what the world calls success, achievement, and distinction, but personally modest, she would be ambitious for the men of her house rather than for herself; finding in the reflected lustre of her husband's fame, her father's honour, her son's success, a truer adjustment of things than any to be had from her own direct glory. She was one, too, who would always retain that fine and honourable reverence for men as the stronger leaders of life,

which once characterised the noble womanhood of England—one who would always believe in the beauty of obedience, and practise the religion of duty. She was somewhat a rare creature to be found in the present day in this dear country of ours, where however once—long ago—the name of woman was synonymous with the gentler virtues, the purer graces of humanity. She did not want to become a medical student, nor to deliver lectures on doubtful subjects to mixed audiences; she did not think her womanhood a degradation nor modesty a sign of weakness; she did not despise her home in favour of ‘causes,’ nor find domestic life a humiliation, while coarse full-flavoured rank publicity gave the only zest to existence. She did not go in for woman’s rights, though she was strong on woman’s duties; and she neither drank wine nor talked slang.

Of these two children of hers, the one so honourable and high-spirited, the other so sweet and faithful, and both so true, Mrs. Smith spoke the simple truth when she said one day to Mr. Oliphant: ‘They have never given me a day’s sorrow since they were born;’ unless she had added, as she might with pitiful earnestness: ‘save in the fact of their being born at all!’

As they were sitting now under the tulip-tree, Muriel, who had been reading English history in the morning, said suddenly, after a long silence:

‘I have always fancied that papa is like Sir Philip Sidney, mamma—just such an honourable, high-minded gentleman—so courteous, so tender, so true.’

The handsome dead-white face did not move a muscle; only the thin nostrils quivered.

‘Your likeness is not a bad one,’ she said quietly. ‘Your father is, as you say, a perfectly gentle and fine-natured man.’

‘I can just remember him,’ continued Muriel. ‘I can remember his coming home one day and bringing me my large wax doll that I have yet, and his kissing me one night at dinner, and crying when a strange gentleman came in. I don’t remember much more.’

‘That was the night when he went away,’ said Derwent.

They had said all this twenty times before, but the sweetness and pleasantness of the absent father, with what they were beginning to feel was a certain mystery about him, were of ever fresh interest to them, a subject of which they never tired.

‘Yes,’ said their mother; ‘that was the night when he went away.’

‘How kind he always was to us!’ said Derwent. ‘I remember

how he used to ride us both on his knees, and the pretty little pony he bought for me!’

‘He was a very fond father, and very generous,’ said Mrs. Smith.

‘Poor dear papa, how I wish that he would come home!’ sighed Muriel, her eyes large and tender.

‘He will some day,’ said the mother, as she had said for the last fourteen years when the subject was discussed as now, and as so often it was discussed. She never checked them in their talk of their father, though she gave them no information.

‘You will be having a letter soon, mother, surely! It is a long time now since you heard from him,’ said Derwent, with a yearning accent.

‘Yes. I should think very soon now,’ she answered.

‘How delightful it would be if he said in it when he would be home!’ cried Muriel. ‘I wonder where he is now, poor darling papa! How happy he will be when he comes back! He will not know Derwent or me. Fancy how odd—a father not knowing his own children; but I am sure that I should know him if I met him anywhere!’

‘It will be only for the first moment that he will not recognise you. Your faces will grow back to him after a short time, though you were such children when he left you,’ answered the mother, always speaking quietly and continuing her work, not raising her eyes as she spoke, and so not looking at her children.

‘You will not be so much altered as we shall be,’ continued Muriel. ‘You are just the same as ever, only you dress your hair a little differently; but you are very little changed from your photographs.’

‘I am stouter and grey,’ she said.

‘And handsomer, mother,’ said Derwent lovingly.

‘I fear that is rather the verdict of a partial judge than of a candid critic,’ returned his mother, still intent on her work. ‘Fourteen years—from twenty-six to forty—do not add to a woman’s good looks.’

‘Papa will not think so, mamma,’ said Muriel.

‘Whatever I am he will be content with me,’ she returned; then she added in a voice that seemed to be artificially steadied: ‘He loves me too well to criticise me too closely.’

‘Poor mamma! what a life for you to have led, and papa too!’ cried Muriel. ‘How good you have been, and how brave! You never complain!’

‘There is no wisdom in complaining when we cannot alter things, my girl,’ answered her mother. ‘Your father was forced

to leave us, and all that I had to do was to take care of you, and bear his absence patiently.'

'At all events, absence is not like dishonour!' said Derwent.

His mother laid down her knitting and calmly wound up her ball of silk.

'No,' she said in her quiet level voice, which, to a keen observer, gave the impression of something controlled, some strong emotion batted down by a stronger will, quite as much as did her statuesque face with that one tell-tale indication alone left as a sign; 'absence is not, as you say, like dishonour, Derwent.'

'With the fearful things which happen every day now, I do not think that any one can be too thankful for an honourable name,' the young fellow continued, lifting his handsome head with the proud little action habitual to him. 'No one knows now who is safe!'

'You are right, my boy; and yet if even the sorrow of shame came into a family it would have to be borne,' she said quietly. After a slight pause she added: 'And the erring member cherished and forgiven.'

'Mother! cherished! You cannot mean that surely!' cried Derwent, full of the pitiless scorn of wrong-doing natural to virtuous youth which has never known a temptation stronger than its principles, and which thinks that no one should fail because it has been able to resist.

'I said what I mean,' was her answer. 'Pity is sometimes nobler than condemnation, and a family must stand or fall together.'

'If ever I disgraced my family I should like to be disowned by them; and I should expect to be disowned,' he cried hotly. 'Our motto is 'Dread Shame,' and I for one have taken it to my heart.'

She looked at him straightly, firmly, quietly.

'If you were ever so unfortunate as to fail your own ideal and disgrace your family—and its motto—your mother at least would stand by you,' she said.

'And your sister,' said Muriel, slipping her hand into his.

'And I—I would not accept your self-sacrifice!' was Derwent's answer. 'A man should be the pride of his family, not its disgrace. I take my strength from my mother and sister!—bolster up myself by dragging them down!—never! If I ever did as you say, mother, fail my ideal, I would leave you and never see you again. And I am sure, from what I remember of him, that my father would say I am right!'

'Do not let us talk of such dreadful things, Derwent,' said Muriel, leaning forward and looking up into his face with her dear

grey eyes full of love and admiration. 'It is a kind of sacrilege to connect our boy's name with disgrace, or dishonour, or anything like that—is it not, mamma! Let us talk instead of what you will do when you have got that place at the Viennese Embassy which uncle Louis has promised you. For you know, mamma and I have to come out to you, and you have to rise to be ambassador yourself some day!'

'If I believed all that you said, Muriel, I should expect to be King of England before I died,' Derwent answered with a little pretence in his deprecation. He was a fine young fellow in every way, but he was only a man after all; and being a man, and not a saint nor a hero, a woman's unlimited belief in him, and love to correspond, came naturally as his deserts. He believed in himself too entirely not to accept another person's faith as his due; and he loved Muriel too fondly on his own account not to find her love for him a just tribute honestly rendered.

'Well, I dare say you would be, if there was a revolution,' said Muriel laughing, but defending her position all the same.

'What do you say, mother—would you like to see me King of England?' he asked playfully.

'Better than ambassador or king if you will develop into a wise and understanding man,' said his mother: 'a man pure and honest for your own part, yet able to distinguish between a fact and a circumstance—able not only to forgive a fault, but even to love the motives which led to it, and to pity and respect the criminal.'

She spoke rather more slowly than was even usual with her, and she always spoke slowly; returning to her subject, and with a certain impressiveness that struck both Derwent and Muriel as meaning more than her words. And yet what could she mean?

'I think that would be hard for me to do, mother,' said Derwent. 'We are all only good for what we are at our best; and no reasoning can excuse weakness—the weakness of sin above all—nor make wrong right.'

'You speak as the young always speak,' said Mrs. Smith, putting away her work. 'Youth is hard; perhaps it ought to be so. It is only by experience and love that we come to that wider judgment which can see all round a thing, and which pities as much as it condemns—which pities more than it condemns.'

'If this is true I do not see where you place your standard of right and wrong, dear mother,' returned Derwent gently enough so far as she was concerned, but with the young dialectician's eagerness for an argument; 'or of what use it is to have any standard at all. If a thing is not absolute it is relative, and the argument

that virtue may change according to circumstance is simply an argument for vice, no more, and one that makes vice and virtue interchangeable terms.'

'You will grow into my position in time, my boy,' she answered quietly. 'Meanwhile, believe that I speak out of an experience greater than your own, when I say that, although we must at all times hold virtue absolute, as you say, for ourselves, we may and must make it relative for others, and excuse in them the thing which we condemn in ourselves. These are things about which there is no arguing,' she continued, rising. 'They are parts of a knowledge which comes only in later years, and by increased experience—knowledge which you must take on trust till you get it for yourself. Do not come in yet, Muriel,' she said to her daughter, who also had risen; 'I am going into my own room. Do you stay here with your brother.'

She looked at them both with a loving look, which in any other mother would have been a smile, then walked slowly across the lawn; stood in the porch for a few minutes as if to examine the first little buds that were beginning to form, and so through the hall into her own room upstairs.

And when there the impassive mask fell, and her calm face changed into one of pinched sharp pain. But even now she did not cry aloud, nor fling herself on her knees, nor shed tears nor rave; she seemed to be afraid of losing her self-control even when alone. She merely stood by the table holding her husband's portrait in her hand—the portrait of that fair, weak, handsome face, so kindly and so pleasure-loving, so sweet-tempered and so vain, with the ambitious motto of 'Dread Shame' stamped in gold beneath the no less ambitious crest—an ermine holding a lily in its mouth. Her hands were tightly clasped and strained; her eyes were fixed and burning; and her thoughts shaped themselves into the unbroken words, which indeed were those by which her life was haunted:

'My love! my beloved! I will be true to you always—but my poor children, my poor ruined children, disgraced and destroyed for ever! But you, my love! you shall come to your throne, to your shelter, to your altar, where no one shall reproach you, and where you shall gain back your self-respect through love. My husband, my beloved—but oh! would that my poor children had never been born!'

CHAPTER III.

UNDER THE TULIP-TREE.

DERWENT and Muriel remained sitting under the tulip-tree where their mother had left them, discussing that mother's new philosophy. Derwent, full of the high-strung ideas of the godliness of honour and the degradation of moral weakness natural to his youth and true to one of his temperament, refused to receive it in any sense, as he said to his sister disdainfully; and he bombarded her with quotations, both Latin and English, to prove that he was right and that his mother and the theory of forgiveness were alike wrong. But Muriel, whose womanly pity rose to that justice which stands higher than legality, said she thought that it might be the best thing under certain conditions.

'It is not to love honour less but mercy more,' she said, in answer to the quotation with which he finally sought to overwhelm her:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

'We have all so much to be forgiven that we cannot afford to condemn others; we condemn ourselves if we do.'

'But forgiven what?' Derwent answered. 'You cannot class a few childish misdemeanours with grave crimes, nor rank unimportant faults and shameful dishonour as things to be judged by the same standard.'

'Perhaps there is not so much difference between them if we take into consideration the power to resist and the force of the temptation. Wrong-doing lies in wilful yielding to temptation more than in the thing that is done,' was her sensible reply.

'Muriel! let me beg of you not to make yourself the apologist of wrong-doing or of wrong-doers,' cried Derwent, assuming his elder-brother air of authority; 'it pains me more than I can bear. It is what you said to me just now—sacrilege to hear your lips defend evil, sacrilege ten times over!'

'Well, darling, do not let us speak of it any more,' she said.

'That is not it, Muriel. Not speaking of a thing does not alter the fact of its existence. I want you not to think such thoughts, not to keep silent on them.'

'You know, Derwent, that I do not want to think differently from you in anything,' she answered very tenderly. 'And you know, too, that I would not willingly pain or vex you by word or deed, anyhow or anywhere; don't you, boy dear?' lovingly.

He put his arm round her waist and gave her a boyish hug.

'I know that you are the sweetest little sister in the world,



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and that I am the luckiest fellow going in having such a mother and such a sister. But you see, Muriel, while my father is away I am the only man in the family; and, superbly, 'it is my duty to take care of you in every way, and to prevent your taking up wrong notions as well as doing foolish things; girls know so little of life!' and he, the home-bred lad who had not tried his young wings yet half-a-dozen miles from the home nest, he knew so much!

'Yes, dear, I see,' returned Muriel. 'Of course you feel yourself responsible.'

'If only our father would come home,' said Derwent with a sigh. 'You cannot think what a loss it is to a man not to have a father to tell him things. It has been the worst misfortune of my life to have been brought up away from him; I feel it more and more every day.'

'Yes, if only papa would come home, how happy we all should be!' echoed Muriel. Then she added tenderly: 'But after all, Derwent boy, you have not done so badly, brought up at home and without a father as you have been. Our boy is as good as the best to be found anywhere; still, if papa had only been at home—'

'Yes, if he had been! Muriel, I wonder where he is? I wish that my mother would tell us; I think I am of an age to know now, close on twenty-one. I do not like to press it, but I feel as if she is scarcely treating me fairly; for, after all, he is my father, and I am a man now.'

'She has some good reason, be sure,' said Muriel, looking into her brother's moved face with as much yearning in her own. 'I should not ask her if I were you, Derwent, if she does not volunteer. She might not like it; and if she does not tell she must have some good reasons.'

'Still, I ought to know; and I think she should confide in me more than she does,' returned Derwent. 'There are times when I can scarcely refrain from asking her point blank where he is and what he is doing; demanding to know by my right as a son!'

'Poor Derwent! it is hard, but you had better wait,' she answered; and then they drifted off into the old fond talk of what they remembered, and what they believed, and how he would find them changed, and the like, till the subject grew from a present pain to a past poem; and, not the father as he was at this moment, but the dear papa as he had been when they were children, filled their minds and hearts. And from this they wandered away to Derwent's brilliant future at the Viennese Embassy, which they embroidered with all those pleasant fancies, that delightful nonsense of delusive hopes, which, to love on the one side and ambition on the other, seem such excellent good sense and so sure

of fulfilment. For, as Muriel said, sagely enough: Some one must be the great man of the rising generation, and why not Derwent as well as another?

That Viennese Embassy was to do everything on earth for them all. Derwent was to rise by leaps, not steps, till he came to be H.B.M. Ambassador himself somewhere, when his mother and Muriel would go and live with him, and the father would come too, and all would go merry as wedding bells—the true wedding bells not chiming even in imagination with the one, with the other perhaps as a faint and delicate echo striking through the rougher sounds of every-day existence.

While they were sitting there talking themselves into perfect happiness for the moment, if the roots thereof were planted in the shifting sands of nowhere, the lodge gate opened and Wilfrid Machell with his sister Hilda came up the drive walking. The Machells were all good walkers, as people generally are who live in the country without horses; and even Hilda, who was but a slight fragile kind of thing in her way—owing more of her strength to blood than to bone—was able to go distances which, to town-bred folk to whom two miles are one and a half too long, were simply appalling and might have seemed reprehensible. For that, too, is what your average reasoner does: makes a Procrustes' bed of his own powers, moral and physical, and judges of the world in conformity therewith.

Muriel, who saw them first, her face being turned that way, cried out in a tone of frank pleasure:

'Oh, Derwent! I am so glad; here are Captain and Hilda Machell.'

The blood came into Derwent's delicate dark face.

'Yes, so it is. Let us go and meet them,' he said quietly, getting up from his seat, not with a start and a plunge, but with perfect grace and self-possession a little tinged with vanity, as belonged to all his personality. Yet, his quietness notwithstanding, his nostrils were dilated like his mother's, and his eyes were bright and eager. Muriel rose too, in no wise disturbed, save that her blush-rose face, sensitive to all emotions, had a slightly warmer tint on its fair surface; and brother and sister went across the lawn to meet that other brother and sister come to visit them.

There were greetings of the usual kind. The men took off their caps, and the women shook hands but did not kiss. Captain Machell's hard plain face lightened at least to the degree demanded by good breeding; perhaps about the small, deep-set, steel-grey eyes was a look that went a trifle beyond that degree, and a flush was under the thick and heavy skin which did not come only from

the exercise of walking. But Captain Machell was a man who had cultivated the Englishman's stolid stoicism of mind and manner, of thought and bearing, till it seemed as if the ultimate perfection of humanity must be to be found in a lobster, say, or a tortoise, or any other thing with a heart and nervous system closely imprisoned in an outer case of bone or horn, or what you will, that gives no sign of feeling and that defies all endeavours to make it feel.

Hilda was of that odd kind of likeness to her brother sometimes found between two people of different sex, and where one is plain, the other beautiful. He was thick-skinned, and mealy in both colour and texture; she was transparent, dark, pure white and red—gossamer to his granite. But underneath all her surface softness, perhaps, she was capable of as much decision and self-sacrifice as he. At all events she was a Machell, and no Machell had yet been found wanting in will when the time for its use came. At the present all was latent, undeveloped with her. She was but a girl still in the schoolroom, and not 'come out;' it was early to speculate on her possibilities of character, and, to do her brother Wilfrid justice, he never did.

Hilda brightened and blushed too as she greeted Muriel warmly and Derwent shyly; and as Derwent held her hand in his and looked into her bewitching eyes, whatever was best in him came to the front, and he forgot both his vanities and his affectations in the poetic idealisation of a boy's first love. As for Muriel, she simply looked glad as at any other pleasant little event; and if her face had a warmer tint, it was more because her skin was of the kind to flush easily than because Wilfrid Machell, with his tall figure and rough-hewn face, was there. She had no special love for him in any way, and there was no reason why she should blush at seeing him.

Then they went back to the tulip-tree, in natural pairs, for the half-hour's talk which was to send two among them still deeper into the fool's paradise in which they had lately begun to live.

Young love nourishes itself on very little. If an eyebrow is occasion for a sonnet, a look, a smile, and half-a-dozen words on the merest trivialities are sufficient to make hope a certainty and the moment's pleasure earnest of a future lifelong and enduring rapture. Directness is the last thing thought of. When Derwent and Hilda were talking about croquet and Badminton, the favourite new novel and the poem of the season, whether *gladiolus* should be pronounced *gladiölus* or *gladiölus*, they were talking of what nourished and represented to them Love as much as if they had mentioned it by name and dilated on their mutual feelings; but love in the vague and shadowy stage, the first flush in the east

before the sun has risen, the tender little crumpled leaves breaking through the sheath before the husk gives way or the bud fairly opens. No one who had only overheard them, and had not seen their faces—his sparkling, earnest, ardent; hers soft, receptive, happy—would have suspected that they were in love; but an adept would have seen it, though only one of the two concerned would have confessed it if taxed with that strange sweet sin against rest and peace. It was Derwent who was beginning to confess to himself that he loved Hilda Machell. As yet the future was a mere dream, governed by possibilities of the kind to be translated into facts when good genii will take the place of those prosaic social considerations which now regulate the affairs of men. He was in the state wherein he longed to do some great deed that she might love him and be proud of him:

Fighting up my way to fame—
Fortune gain that you might share it—
Make a name that you might wear it,
And be proud to bear my name;

wherein he longed to be able to sacrifice his life for her, as the poor 'bold and lovely knight' sacrificed his for the Lady of the Land, well rewarded if only she would strew flowers on his grave and sit there in the summer moonlight, and be sorrowful and sad-hearted; wherein he found a special value in that moonlight, and ran great risk of taking cold by leaning out of his bedroom window in his shirt-sleeves, composing halting rhymes and dreaming romantic dreams, rather than going to his bed as a wiselike, dounce, and Christian body should, when the church clock had chimed midnight. At the back of all this was a vision, faint and tenderly sketched in, of an exquisite English house with a lovely little person standing at the gate to welcome the husband's home-coming in the evening—a lovely little person called wife, and Hilda, and held as his own for ever—the money for the maintenance of this vision to be had by some miraculous advancement in the diplomatic service; means not clearly made out.

As for Hilda, she had not come into any such consciousness of her state as this, and was far yet from weaving intelligible visions or dreaming coherent dreams. Her condition was one to be summed up simply in these words: she liked being with Derwent Smith better than with any one else, because she did; she thought him quite the handsomest young man in the world, and the most agreeable—not even excepting her brother Arthur, who came next; what other people called his vanity seemed to her only a proper manly self-assertion, and she would not like him to be different in any way from what he was; Muriel was the

dearest girl that could possibly exist, and with such a pretty voice ! so like her brother's !—and Owlett was the most charming place in all Grantley Bourne. She admired it so much ! She was never happier than when she was there : all for artistic love of the flowers and the trees, the picturesque house with its twisted chimneys and gable roof rising above the flower-hid façade, and that steep slope of varied foliage banked up by the old wall covered with mosses and rare ferns ; it was only her artistic appreciation of all this which made Owlett so charming to her ; in no wise because Derwent's image was intermingled therewith, and Derwent's presence was to be found therein. But the first stirrings of a maiden's unacknowledged love are of all things on earth the most shadowy and self-deceiving—the tenderest in form and the purest in colour. So beautiful are they that it is almost a pity when they have to be exchanged for the fuller knowledge of a woman's riper passion.

As for Captain Machell—Wilfrid to his friends—for the last two years, whenever he had been down at Machells, he had gone over to Owlett as often as he could find excuse or occasion for going. He had gone with the feeling that a poor artist might have when standing before the masterpiece which he covets before all else in the world, but which by no possible stroke of good fortune can ever be his. No one read his heart underneath that cold manner and plain hard face of his ; least of all Muriel, to whose thinking, innocently unjust, the rugged surface was the true evidence of the ungentle nature beneath. But Wilfrid was brave enough to acknowledge the truth to himself, and strong enough not to allow passion to overcome resolution, personal pleasure the duties of his position. A poor captain in the army with an empty purse now, a ruined estate and a fine old name for his inheritance, what right had he to think of love in marriage ? unless he could find it in that rare gift of kindly fate—a woman beautiful, young, rich, and love-worthy all in one. He must marry money : he and his younger brother Arthur, and his sister Hilda. They must all marry money ; and Mrs. Smith, though well off for one of her modest refinement of living, had evidently no fortune to give or bequeath that would disencumber Machells and restore the old family to its rightful position in the county. Muriel might be the very ideal of womanhood in herself, but another man must win and wear her, he used to think bitterly when the fever fit was on him more badly than usual ; and like all passionate people who nourish a secret sorrow, a hidden sore, he turned the knife in his wound with his own hands diligently, and because he was unhappy as things were, agonised himself for the

things that were not. Yes, another man must win and wear her; and he must stand by, silent then as now, and take for his own share some wealthy heiress whom he could never love, because the Machells had been an untoward race and had gambled away fields and forests, and then gone to the money-lenders for mortgages on what they could not alienate.

In spite of the impossibilities however of coming out into the sunshine on this side of his life, Wilfrid often went over to Owlett when he came down to the old place on leave. It was something to see the sweet face which he loved as he had never loved any other—a folly if you will; dram-drinking if you will; but he had a strong head, and could venture on dram-drinking without fear of being carried away into excess. After they had been talking for a little while on two or three profoundly uninteresting subjects, Wilfrid said, a little abruptly:

‘By-the-bye, Miss Smith, did you know that Arthur has been ill? He is better now; but he has had a bad time of it, poor old fellow, by all accounts.’

Muriel turned her head quickly. She was pale, and a look of terror had come into her eyes.

‘Ill!’ she echoed.

‘He is better now,’ continued Wilfrid slowly. Her sudden paleness and that look of unmistakable terror struck him. ‘He is coming home to-morrow for a few weeks’ change of air, and he will soon be all right again, I dare say.’

‘I am glad that he is coming home, for Lady Machell to nurse him well again,’ returned Muriel, her cheeks crimson, and her mouth relaxed into a happy little smile as suddenly as it had contracted into her mother’s pinched look of pain. Then she added, in the manner of an apology: ‘We had not heard of his illness at all. Lady Machell spoke to us last Sunday at church, but she did not tell us.’

‘Because she did not know of it then,’ said Wilfrid, still looking at her intently; so intently indeed that she felt abashed and ill at ease, as if morally under the inquisition. ‘Arthur told us only to-day how bad he had been. He did not wish to frighten my mother. You know what a good, unselfish fellow he is?’

Muriel raised her eyes on this. They beamed right into his, those great blue eyes, so bright and full of joy—eyes that no man living could have resisted had she used them for prayers—or promises.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘he always was, even when quite a boy; and most boys are anything but unselfish!’ laughing lightly.

‘I am glad that you appreciate him,’ said Wilfrid coldly. ‘For my part, I remember him more like a bumble-headed puppy

than anything else. He has grown up a fine fellow enough; but for his boyhood—we will let that pass.'

'You are not very flattering to your poor brother,' said Muriel, secretly indignant but trying to be decorously hypocritical in the way of assumed pleasantness.

There was something about Captain Machell's face that oppressed, almost frightened her. It was so hard and forbidding; and those small, deep-set, steel-grey eyes, with their piercing looks, seemed to read her through and through. Yet why should they not? She was unconscious of anything to conceal. Arthur was nothing to her but a pleasant, well-bred, handsome young man whom she had known ever since he was a frank and kindly boy who never did cruel things to animals, and had no special passion for dirt, who did not 'put upon' her because she was a girl, nor tease her in their childish games, but who was always ready to take her part when others bullied her—as ready as Derwent himself. And if she was sorry to hear of his illness and glad to see him again, why should Captain Machell look so grimly at her, and make her feel guilty and ashamed, in fault and frightened? She was so silly to turn pale and blush so easily as she did—but she could not help it. It was part of her nature, and every one knew it. How often she had been laughed at for her April-day face, as Lady Machell used to call it when she was little, and tears came where paleness came now, and laughter for present smiles and blushes! These thoughts, or rather, not conscious thoughts but mental impressions, ran through her mind while Wilfrid looked at her so persistently, so grimly, that she cast down her eyes in trouble.

'And what was I, Miss Smith, when my brother was your *prenx chevalier* whose boyish graces you defend so warmly?' he asked with a certain unpleasant sneer. Assuredly, if he loved Muriel, as he did, he took pains to make her think his feeling for her something very unlike love.

'You were always so much older than we were, we never dared to make you anything,' said Muriel, with as little disturbance of mind and manner as she could muster.

'I did not know that I had been so formidable—like a kite among the love-birds, I suppose?' he said, with a short laugh.

'No, not formidable in that way; you were always kind,' she answered. 'But you were not our playfellow; and you know a very little difference in age frightens children from companionship.'

'I was of use however, sometimes; as that day when I carried you home from Machells in my arms,' said Wilfrid dryly.

She lost countenance again. What was natural enough with a boy or a child, was not pleasant to be reminded of now, when she

was a grown woman and he a man of the world who knew the meaning of words and the value of reminiscences.

‘Yes,’ she said shyly; ‘when I had sprained my foot by falling over the rocks in the glen, and could not walk.’

‘I carried you; and Arthur ran by us and occasionally varied the entertainment by crying,’ he said a little contemptuously.

‘He was only a little fellow then,’ pleaded Muriel. ‘And he was frightened because he had pushed me over the rock in play. He could not have been more than twelve years old then. I was only seven, and you were eighteen—were you not?—quite a giant to us little people!’

She tried to be playful and natural; but the playfulness was as forced as the naturalness, and the truest sentiment of the moment was constraint.

‘All the same I remember that when I brought you home you kissed Arthur and told him that you loved him and he was not to mind; but I do not remember your kissing me,’ returned Wilfrid, still in the same disagreeable manner, contemptuous, cold, reproachful, all in one.

‘Did I not?’ said Muriel, trying to speak as if she were not troubled; ‘what an ungrateful little monster I must have been!’

‘No, you were only a woman in little,’ he answered grimly. ‘You loved best the one who hurt you—but who cried; and the one who helped you, you did not care for and scarcely thanked.’

‘Do you think then that all women are ungrateful?’ Muriel asked, anxious to draw the conversation from herself.

‘They are weak,’ he replied. ‘You are answered.’

‘Would you have them to be as strong as men?’ she asked again, feeling this endeavour at conversation one of the most difficult tasks that she had ever had to accomplish.

‘No! they are best perhaps as they are. Men are but poor creatures at the best, and women are their superiors in some things—*a few*, that is, not many.’

‘According to you, then, neither men nor women are worth much,’ said Muriel, a little indignant at this blasphemy against humanity, which has always found its adherents as well as its opponents.

‘Not much. A clever horse and a good dog are worth more. They do not deceive and they are not ungrateful; which is what you cannot say of men and women.’

‘Captain Machell!’

‘Miss Smith!’

‘How can you say such dreadful things!’ she cried reproachfully.

‘I would not think as you do for the whole world. It is fearful!’

'I am unfortunate in your disapprobation of my views,' said Wilfrid coldly. 'But women seldom see things in the same light as men. They prefer rose-coloured nonsense to the truth. Perhaps it is best for them; the strong meat that suits men is not after all fit diet for babes.'

'I do not think that universal contempt for all mankind can be the truth,' Muriel answered; 'and that dogs and horses are better than men and women.'

'I bow to your superior knowledge of the world,' said Wilfrid, with perfect breeding as to form and intense unpleasantness as to spirit. 'I will try then to think that the world is made up of saints and heroes, and that sin and folly are words without meaning. Will that suit your views?'

'Not said in that tone; and besides, that is an exaggeration,' Muriel answered in her pretty, soft way, but not the less direct because it was soft. 'The world certainly is not made up of saints and heroes—I wish it were! but surely there is a little less sin and folly than you give it credit for. There is some good among us!'

He turned his eyes upon her, with a sudden flash.

'Perhaps,' he said, after a moment's pause; 'a few women here and there are not so bad; but they are so few—the exception would prove the rule.'

'What has made you such a misanthrope, Captain Machell?' Muriel asked. 'You used not to hold all these terrible opinions in old days!'

A slight twitch came over the hard dull face.

'Did I not?' he answered. 'It seems to me that ever since I knew the world I have thought as I do now, that life is a muddle, and humanity a gross blunder, and that the whole game is not worth the candle paid for it.'

'Oh!' cried Muriel; 'what a dreadful theory! I should not care to live at all if I held it.'

Again that slight twitch crossed his face.

'You would find many people to agree with you,' he said quietly; and then looking at his watch he called to his sister, 'Come, Hilda! it is time to go.'

'Yes,' said Hilda, brought suddenly down from paradise and landed in the desert.

She was too true a Machell however to dispute the necessary arrangement of things, whatever it cost her; above all, too true a Machell to oppose her brother Wilfrid. The father's favourite, the future head of the house and owner of the estate, so much older too than either Arthur or his sister, he had always been exalted far beyond the others, and had held with Hilda especially

something of the position of deputy father, a kind of *petit papa* second only to the real thing. His will was law, and Hilda would as soon have thought of disobeying her mother herself, as of saying no to her brother's yes, or opposing her desires to his demands at any time, or on any occasion.

'I have not said a word to Hilda yet. Must you really go so soon?' asked Muriel, laying her hand on Hilda's arm.

'If Wilfrid says that it is time to go,' said Hilda hesitatingly, looking at her brother.

What a curious underlikeness there was between them in spite of the superficial differences! For he was tall and square, with straight light hair of no decided colour, and small deeply-set light-grey eyes, a sallow skin and hard rude lips, and she was small and round in all her forms; her hair was a dark rich brown full of little curls and waves; her eyes were dark too; and her complexion alone would have made the fortune of one whose fortune was in her face. But there was the same expression underneath the modifications of size and sex; and though Hilda in her first girlhood was all sweetness and charm, she had potentialities, and she was not weak. She was very young yet—more than a year younger than Muriel—and not having achieved the magic year of eighteen, was not formally introduced. The three girls of the neighbourhood stood thus: Hilda Machell not quite eighteen; Muriel not quite twenty; Jemima Brown de Paumelle, of Paumelle House, not quite twenty-one, but soon to be of age, and to be declared the heiress of all her father's houses and lands and stock and scrip, with becoming magnificence.

'I cannot wait long,' said Wilfrid a little ungraciously, as he sat down again, and Muriel began a talk with Hilda, chiefly about the ball which the Brown de Paumelles were to give on the fourth of next month, June, when Jemima should be of age, and all the countryside were to be invited to take cognisance of that fact by an act of notification of unparalleled magnificence.

'I saw Miss de Paumelle yesterday, and she said that the invitations would be sent out this evening,' said Hilda. 'I believe it will be a splendid ball; but I do not know yet if mamma will let me go or not.'

'Not go!' cried Muriel.

'Not go!' echoed Derwent.

If he had heard that the Government had made a bargain with the French, and sold the fee simple of the English crown for a consideration, his voice could not have expressed more dismay. A ball of the dimensions of that about to be given at Paumelle House was an event in a limited country society which no one would

willingly forego; but without the presence of the one Derwent felt that it would be of no value to him, and that he would rather spend the evening in melancholy musings under the tulip-tree alone, than be where mirth and music only recalled too painfully the absence of her who of herself made mirth and music in his life, and without whom was only the pretence.

‘You see, I have not come out yet,’ said Hilda meekly; ‘and mamma is naturally very particular.’

Muriel looked at Captain Machell.

‘My mother knows best about these things,’ he said, answering her unspoken appeal. ‘Hilda is very young yet; there is plenty of time before her.’

‘But there will not be many balls like this at Paumelle House,’ said Muriel, standing on the old exhortation to seize the present. ‘Of course Lady Machell knows best, but it seems such a pity—and when Hilda will be eighteen so soon—in October, Hilda, is it not?’

‘Yes,’ said Hilda, ‘the twelfth.’

‘Nearly six months’ time!’ said Wilfrid in his dry way.

‘Oh, that does not signify!’ cried Muriel. ‘Captain Machell, plead for us with your mother!’

A sudden flash came from Derwent’s dark eyes. What a darling that sister of his was, he thought; how sympathetic and how clever! Something kept him back from joining in any prayer or pleading—a kind of half-unconscious perception that it would be unwise to show much interest in the matter, and that if he did he would be more likely to damage than advance their cause against the authorities. But he looked at Muriel with a passionate meaning in his face that for the first time showed her the truth of things and told her that her brother loved this pretty chestnut-headed friend of theirs, this daughter of the proud and penniless Machells, she on whose splendid marriage it was well known that father and mother and brother counted as a foregone conclusion, a certainty which nothing but death could destroy, and for whom common report said that Lady Machell had marked down rich Guy Perceval of the Manor, failing some prince from the clouds who would make a better *parti* still.

Had Captain Machell seen that look which enlightened Muriel and thrilled Hilda with a young girl’s sweet assurance of supremacy in a handsome lad’s affections, the chapter of events between Machell and Owlett would have been ended on the spot. What Wilfrid had smothered in himself, batted under the hatches of inexorable necessity and an iron will, he was not likely to tolerate in his sister; but the day of grace had not yet drawn to a close, and the gates of that misleading paradise still stood open. Suspect-

ing nothing, and by the young man's very silence, wrought out as it was by love, kept in continued ignorance of that love, stirred on his own part by Muriel's pleading face and loving eyes, Wilfrid answered with sudden softness, and in its turn self-betraying graciousness—

‘I will do what I can to induce my mother to let Hilda go, if it will please you, Miss Smith. I dare say I can influence her if I try, and if I use your name. You are such a favourite at Machells that I am sure we would all stretch a point to please you.’

‘You are very kind, thank you,’ said Muriel with an embarrassment as sudden as his graciousness; for Derwent's face still disturbed her, and Hilda's pretty little pleased expression seemed as dangerous as his silent, but deeper and more passionate delight. And Wilfrid, not having the key, asked himself twenty times: ‘Why did Muriel blush and look down, and suddenly become constrained when I said that she was a favourite at Machells? What did she connect with that? What did she think that I meant?’

He asked himself in vain. When he had reached the twentieth time he knew no more and had no clearer response than on the first.

Then they went away, and Derwent and his sister were left alone; and when they were alone Muriel went close up to her brother, standing a little apart facing the drive, but pretending to be looking at anything rather than Hilda Machell walking down it, and, putting both her hands in his, said simply his name: ‘Derwent!’ looking him full in the face.

He understood her.

‘Yes, Muriel,’ he said in a low voice; ‘it is so. I cannot pretend to deny it, and I cannot hide it from myself any longer.’

‘But, Derwent, dearest boy, they will never consent!’ she exclaimed. ‘They want money so dreadfully, and you know quite well that we are not rich and, mamma says, never shall be.’

‘Not rich now, and they would not consent now,’ he said; ‘but they will presently, my little sister, when I have made my name and position. If she will care for me enough to keep firm we shall conquer in the end.’

‘But does she?’ asked Muriel.

‘I have not asked her yet, but I think she does,’ he answered. ‘Soft as she is, so exquisitely soft and gentle, she has plenty of will when it is roused, and she is far too honourable and high-minded to break her word when she has once given it. It will all come right in the end, I feel sure of that, Muriel!’

‘Oh, Derwent, darling, I hope so, but it is a tremendous risk that you are running; a fearful chance to stake all your life on.’

'Nothing venture, you know, my precious little sister,' he said, tossing back his hair; the vanity of his ordinary days broadened out into a finer form of manly self-confidence, of trust in his own energy and power by which he was to level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Why should he not, indeed? Courage, talent, hope, energy, faith, beauty—he had them all; what more was wanting wherewith to overcome difficulties and compel fortune to his service?

True: but up there behind locked doors, the mother standing before the picture of her husband and their father, crying in her heart: 'My poor ruined children, disgraced and destroyed for ever! would that they had never been born!'

(To be continued.)

Love's Magic Mirror.

AN OLD CHRISTMAS GAME.

I

If love were firm as thou art fair,
And hope were safe as thou art sweet,
Thou need'st not fear my fate to share,
Or doubt the heart laid at thy feet.
But deepest love is oftenest wasted,
And hopes too fond may fade too soon,
And honey flowers, too rashly tasted,
May die in their own passion's swoon.

II

Thou doubttest me: I doubt thee, too;
Let's try the magic of old days:
A mirror hold midst star-lit dew;
See what it paints, hear what it says!
In lonely grove, then, near thy bed,
Gaze at thyself with quickening thought!
Thine inner life, an instant caught,
Will show what influence love has bred.

III

Last night thou saw'st within thy glass
A face lit up by heavenly gleams!
Expressions of angelic dreams,
Which from thy memory cannot pass.
Receive them as Love's magic guide—
A light from Nature's parent hand,
Whereby two hearts may understand
A truth revealed, whate'er betide.

R. H. HORNE.

A Japanese Holiday.

VERY truly have the Japanese been called the 'French of the East.' Their ideas, their whims, their mode of life, their manner of thought, all recall to the traveller visiting that country for the first time the gay, careless, pleasure-loving people he left on the banks of the Seine, ten thousand miles away, but six weeks back.

Of the future the Japanese think little and care less. Their religions admit the existence of a future state, but life they strive to liken to a pleasant walk through vales of gladness, through gardens where care never penetrates, where everything is happy and smiling. And this ideal they attempt to realise in every action of their everyday life. Pleasure is to them the *summum bonum*.

The modern rage for self-civilisation after the Western model has driven much of this spirit out of the inhabitants of the great towns, where foreign influences are most active, and where everyone finds himself more or less obliged to be a competitor in the great race for wealth; but in the smaller towns and villages, away from the beaten tourist tracks, life goes on in the same old groove, and no spirit of innovation has as yet crept in to spoil and demolish every quaint and picturesque remain of old Japan.

No excuse is too trivial in the eyes of a Japanese of the old school for a holiday—Saints' days, anniversaries of the births, deaths, and deeds of the great of old times, the first and last days of the four seasons, festivals in honour of the great tutelary deities, and, in addition, the particular white days of every private family, are all seized upon as pretexts for a temporary escape from the counter, the desk, the field, and the workshop. Sundays, in our sense of the word, they have none, but 'ICHI-ROKU,' or one day in every six, is always a strict holiday, the shops and public offices being closed, and the pleasure-resorts crowded.

The great city of Yedo, in addition to a circle of beautiful suburbs, possesses many parks and gardens set apart for popular pleasure-making, and a visit to one of these public resorts on the occasion of a great holiday well repays the student of Japanese habits, manners, and customs.

The most extensive, most beautiful, and most popular of all is, perhaps, the park of Uwenô, situated in a broad plateau five miles beyond the centre of the city—the 'Nihon Bashi,' or Bridge of Japan—and a short way past the huge fane of the hundred-handed

god of mercy, Quanon, at Asakusa, so well known to foreign tourists. Originally this park was consecrated as the burial-place of the Shoguns, or actual emperors of the land, and amidst a wild luxuriance of wood and thicket, their tombs are still pointed out, adjoining some of the most exquisite little temples in Japan. When, however, Shiba—in the city proper—was adopted as the imperial burying-ground, the glory of Uweno departed, and the last cruel blow was struck during the revolution of 1868, when the broad plateau became the scene of many desperate conflicts between the followers of the defeated Shogun and those of the present Mikado. Artillery, then first used to any extent in Japanese warfare, made sad havoc amongst the trees and temples of the sacred park, and the guides who accompany the visitor tell him that the existing temples are nothing in extent and beauty to those destroyed. However, a very pleasant day may be spent in the solitude of the deserted temples, wandering amongst the broad avenues of huge trees, as calm and quiet as if they were a hundred miles from a city of more than a million inhabitants.

The citizen of modern Yedo holds the historical associations of Uweno of far less account than the fair which is annually held there in the month of March, when the cherry-blossoms are in all their glory, and when every one deems it his duty to make holiday and go there to enjoy the first signs of spring. From a very early hour the streets leading to the park are crowded with holiday-makers of all grades of society and of all ages. Every man, woman, and child has donned his or her clothes of the brightest holiday hues, and the usually sombre streets are ablaze with colour.

The toilette of a Japanese damsel is a matter of no light consideration, and to be in good time for the fair she must be up and dressing long before the sun rises from behind the great sacred mountain, Fuji. The long coarse tresses of raven-black hair must be washed, combed, and greased till the head shines like a knob of polished black marble; the cheeks must be rouged to the proper tint; the throat, neck, and bosom powdered—carefully leaving, however, on the nape of the neck three lines of the original brown skin of the owner, in accordance with the rules of Japanese cosmetic art; the eyebrows must be carefully rounded and touched with black; the lips reddened with cherry paste, with a patch of gilding in the centre. When all this has been done, and the layers of clothes properly adjusted, the 'obi,' or huge sash of many colours, tied in the knot of prevailing fashion, the cleanest of white socks and the newest of black lacquered clogs put on the feet—the belle is ready, and with the proper allowance of pocket-handkerchief paper, her tobacco-pouch, pipe, and fan, she sails forth,

turning her toes well in, and playing in well-affected demureness with her fan. Her mother is likewise painted, combed, and adorned; but not a vestige of eyebrow graces her forehead, and her teeth are as black as jet, according to the rules of married women. Her father is clean shaved, his 'queue,' or top-knot, smoothly pasted on his head, and his raiment new, stiff, and shining—with the family crest embroidered on back and sleeves.

In the streets there are hundreds of neighbours, similarly decked and arrayed, bowing, scraping, paying compliments, chattering, laughing, and pattering along on their high wooden clogs towards the pleasaunce. Critical eyes examine head-dresses and 'obis,' coquettish eyes laugh and convey tender messages from behind fans, thereby bringing down reproofs from stern parental eyes, which, however, soon twinkle at some jest or well-turned compliment. Everything is good-humour, happiness, and enjoyment, and the cloudless blue sky above, the occasional twitter of birds—for Japan is but poorly off for feathered warblers—and the glitter of the sunshine, all go to make up a holiday picture scarcely to be equalled out of Japan.

Very striking is the scene, as one mounts the steep ascent leading to the plateau of Uweno. In front, as far as the eye can reach, is a broad avenue of cherry-trees—the pink-and-white blossoms forming a fairy arcade overhead, through which glints of the deep blue sky are here and there visible. On each side, over the heads of the motley, jostling, many-coloured crowd of holiday-makers, is a broad sweep of woodland, fresh and bright in the tints of early spring, and along the avenue itinerant merchants have established booths for the sale of every conceivable useful and ornamental article. Here is a quack doctor, clad in quaint garb, vaunting, 'à toutes forces,' the virtues of a pill which will cure any disease, and prolong the most precarious of lives; here is a juggler, who, for a very small handful of copper cash, will tempt his digestion with small swords and live charcoal; near him is the booth of a famous kite-seller, always surrounded by urchins tempted by aerial warriors, birds, fishes, reptiles, or huge portraits of Hachiman, the god of war, or of the great warrior-emperor, Taico-Sama. Nor does the neighbouring stall of the sweet-stuff merchant lack patronage, for at the will of his purchasers, with a few dexterous turns of the fingers, he will convert a shapeless lump of sugared dough into anything, from a pilgrim in heavy marching order to a brace of rats nibbling at a bale of rice; then there are stalls for fried fish, fruit shops, fan and umbrella shops, here and there a booth for the sale of trumpery foreign knick-knacks, and at one corner an enterprising tailor has established himself, and,

clad in a very ill-fitting, seedy suit of evening dress, swaggers about in front of a collection of left-off European clothes of which even Monmouth Street would be ashamed.

But though the stalls and shows do a roaring trade, the tea-houses are the centre of the fun of the fair. These Uweno tea-houses are not permanent structures, decorated with gilded screens and highly-coloured paintings, but are mere shanties of wood, run up or taken down in a very few minutes; they are, however, under the superintendence of the great tea-house proprietors of the capital, so that all the luxuries of the season may be obtained, made more palatable by the fact of being served in a certain picnicking, rough-and-tumble manner, rather agreeable than otherwise to the citizens accustomed to the formality and close atmosphere of the within-town places of entertainment.

Scarcely sitting room on the mats is to be obtained for love or money. The attendant damsels—prettily attired in light summer robes of a uniform pattern—are almost at their wits' ends, in the clamour from all sides for fish, rice, wine, chop-sticks, and bills: and yet, though hurried here and there, sometimes reprimanded for not being in two places at once, chaffed, ordered about, and sworn at, they never lose temper—the red lips are always smiling, and pleasant complimentary speeches are being shot about in all directions. And very hard work it must be to preserve equanimity under such circumstances, for beyond the actual physical exertion which the poor girls—few of them over seventeen years of age—must undergo, they must ever be ready with honeyed words and impromptu repartee, and the accounts must never be incorrect,—for, with all his virtues, your Yedo citizen is not prodigal in expenditure even on gala days, and a cash or two charged too much would bring upon the shoulders of the erring calculator a tremendous rebuke from the mistress of the house.

To the European visitor the scene is bewildering. Whilst the ear is assailed with the ceaseless rattle of voices and dishes, the pattering of clogs, and the occasional bursts of song and laughter from guests well advanced in the stages of enjoyment, the eye wanders over a restless sea of coloured garments, interspersed with bronzed faces and flashing black eyes, quick-moving fingers, gesticulating, passing wine-cups, and handling chop-sticks with a dexterity which seems marvellous, and bustling female forms gliding about with huge relays of raw fish, omelettes, soup, and steaming wine. As soon as one party rises another fills up the vacant space, and the work of eating, drinking, laughing, talking, and singing goes on from morn till night. Outside the tea-houses, beneath the canopy of cherry-blossoms, a motley crowd surges to and fro. At the end of the avenue is a temple dedicated to Benzaiten—the

goddess of the sea, and the reputed mother of five hundred gods. Hither resort the faithful to pay their homage; approaching, with heads bent and hands clasped in supplication, towards the portal, to which is attached a gong and a heavy knotted rope. The noise of the gong, which serves the purpose of calling the attention of the goddess, never ceases, nor does the accompaniment of cash rattling into a huge wooden coffer beneath it. Lengthy devotion is not expected from the holiday-makers—a few murmured syllables, a ring at the gong, a money offering, a receipt from the priest of a piece of charmed paper with the image of the goddess stamped thereon; and the devotee rejoins the mirth and merriment outside.

Our English holiday-makers might learn a capital lesson from the behaviour of this Japanese crowd. Quarrelling and drunkenness are entirely limited to a few soldiers of the newly-modelled army, who, in dirty ill-fitting uniforms, and with side-arms, think it capital fun to swagger about, jostling and laughing at the staid citizens. Not a policeman is to be seen, for none is needed. The ease with which the Japanese nature may be amused appears to European eyes almost childish. The spectators at the shows are by no means entirely juvenile. Grey-haired fathers of families may be seen roaring with laughter at the eccentric movements of a few dolls, or gaping with wonder at performing birds and mice; the science of kite-flying finds its votaries as much amongst the elderly as amongst the younger folks, whilst members of the great city companies do not think it at all ‘*infra dig.*’ to shoot at plaster casts of popular heroes with bows and arrows, in hope of winning a packet of sweets or a doll.

And so throughout the bright fresh spring day goes on the feasting and merriment at Uweno. As the sun begins to hide his head behind the huge red roof of the Asakusa temple, the crowd thinks of returning homewards—a little fatigued, perhaps, but showing none of the symptoms of total exhaustion and ill-humour too generally characteristic of our English holiday crowds at the finish of a day’s ‘outing.’

The return home is characterised by greater quiet and absence of excitement than the going to the fair in the morning; for under the influence of the calm night with the clear silver moon shining above, many a heart is offered and taken, many a black coquettish eye speaks what, in the garish light of day in the view of every one, it dare not speak; and a very pleasant close to the day’s proceedings is the picture of the sturdy citizens and their ample wives, the lithe, clean-limbed young artisans and the plump, raven-tressed damsels, the children laughing and chattering over their newly-acquired toys, proceeding to well-earned rest after a day’s innocent enjoyment.

GOOD STORIES OF MAN AND OTHER ANIMALS.

BY CHARLES READE.

9. *Doubles.*

PART I.

WE live in an age of bad English. There is a perverse preference for weak foreign, to strong British, phrases, and a run upon abstract terms, roundabout phrases, polysyllables, and half-scientific jargon on simple matters, like velvet trimming on a cotton print.

Addison could be content to write: 'My being his nearest neighbour gave me some knowledge of his habits;' but our contemporaries must say, 'The fact of my being his nearest neighbour gave me,' &c. Now observe: in the first place, it is not 'the fact' but 'the circumstance;' and in the next, both 'fact' and 'circumstance' are superfluous and barbarous. Probably the schoolboys, who invented this circumlocution, had been told by some village schoolmaster that a verb can only be governed by a noun substantive. Pure illusion! it can be governed by a sentence with no nominative case in it, and the Addisonian form is good, elegant, classical English. All the Roman authors are full of examples; and, unless my memory fails me, the very first Latin line, cited as good syntax in the old Eton grammar, is:

Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

Try your nineteenth-century grammar on this—it is a fair test. 'Factum discendi ingenuas artes emollit mores.' Why is this so glaringly ridiculous in Latin, yet current in English? Simply because bad English is so common, and bad Latin never was.

To die is landing on some distant shore.

This line of Garth's turned into nineteenth-century English would be: 'The fact of dying is identical with landing on some distant shore.'

If I could scourge that imbecile phrase, 'the fact of,' out of England, I should be no slight benefactor to our mother-tongue. I may return one day to the other vices of English I have indicated above. At present I will simply remark that what I call 'Doubles,' the writers of the new English call 'CASES OF MISTAKEN

IDENTITY.' Phœbus! what a mouthful! This is a happy combination of the current vices.

1. Here is a term dragged out of philosophy to do vulgar work.

2. It is wedded to an adjective, which cannot co-exist with it. You may mistake a man for A, or you may identify him with A. But you cannot do both; for, if you mistake, you do not identify, and, if you identify, you do not mistake.

3. Here are eleven syllables set to do the work of two. Now in every other art and science economy of time and space is the great object; only the English of the day aims at *parvum in multo*. But, thank Heaven! 'good old Double is not dead yet,' though poisoned with exotics, and smothered under polysyllables.

There are always many persons on the great globe, who seem like other persons in feature when the two are not confronted; but, setting aside twins, it is rare that out of the world's vast population any two cross each other's path so like one another as to bear comparison. Where comparison is impossible, the chances are that the word 'Double' is applied without reason. Sham Doubles are prodigiously common. My note-books are full of them. Take two examples out of many. Two women examine a corpse carefully, and each claims it as her husband. It is interred, and by-and-by both husbands walk into their wives' houses, alive, and—need I say?—impenitent. A wife has a man summoned for deserting her. Another woman identifies him in the police-court as her truant husband. This looks ugly, and the man is detained. Two more wives come in and swear to him. A pleasing excitement pervades the district. Our lady novelists had kept to the trite path of bigamy; but truth, more fertile, was going to indulge us with a quadrigamy. Alas! the quadrigamist brought indisputable evidence, that he had been a public officer in India at the date of all the four marriages, and had never known one of these four injured females, with the infallible eyes cant assigns to that sex.

Sometimes the sham Double passes current by beguiling the ears in a matter, where the eyes, if left to themselves, would not have been deceived. The most remarkable cases on record of this are the false Martin Guerre, and the sham Tichborne. A short comparison of these two cases may serve to clear the way to my story.

Fifteenth century—Martin Guerre, a small peasant proprietor in the South of France, and a newly-married man, left his wife, and went soldiering, and never sent her a line in eight years. Then came a man, who like Martin had a mole on his cheek-bone, and similar features: only he had a long beard and moustache.

He said things to the wife and sister of Martin Guerre, which no stranger could have said, and indeed reminded the wife of some remark she had made to him in the privacy of their wedding night. He took his place as her husband, and she had children by him. But her uncle had always doubted; and, when the children came to divert the inheritance from his own offspring, he took action and accused the new-comer of fraud. It came to trial; there were a prodigious number of respectable witnesses on either side; but the accused was about to carry it, when stump—stump—stump,—came an ominous wooden leg into the court, and there stood the real Martin Guerre, crippled in the wars. The supposed likeness disappeared all but the mole, and the truth was revealed. The two Martins had been soldiers and drunk together in Flanders, and Martin had told his knavish friend a number of little things. With these the impostor had come and beguiled the ears, and so prejudiced the eyes. French law was always severe. They hanged him in front of the real man's door.

Orton's case had the same feature. His witnesses saw by the ear. He began by pumping a woman, who wanted to be deceived, and from her and one or two more he obtained information, with which he dealt adroitly, and so made the long ears of weak people prejudice their eyes. As for his supposed likeness to Tichborne, that went not on clean observation, but on wild calculation.

'If Martin Guerre, whom you knew beardless, had grown a long beard, don't you think he would be like this?'

'Yes, I do; for there's his mole, and he knew things none but Martin Guerre could.'

'If Roger Tichborne, whom you knew as thin as a lath, had become as fat as a porpoise, don't you think he would be like this man?'

'Yes, I do; for his eyes twitch like Roger's, and he knows some things Roger knew.'

Eleven independent coincidences prove the claimant to be Arthur Orton; and three such coincidences have never failed to hang a man accused of murder. But that does not affect the question as to whether he was *like* Tichborne. There is, however, no reason whatever to believe that he was a bit like him. In the first place, it is not in the power of any man to divine how a very lean man would look were he to turn very fat in the face; and in the next place the fat was granted contrary to experience: for it is only a plump young man who gets fat at thirty; a lean man at twenty-one is never a porpoise till turned forty. To conclude, this is no case of Doubles, but the shallowest imposture recorded in all history; and the fools who took a fat, living snob,

with a will of iron, for a lean, dead aristocrat, with a will of wax, have only to thank their long ears for it: no downright delusive appearance ever met their eyes.

A much nearer approach to a Double occurred almost under my eyes.

A certain laughter-loving dame, the delight of all who knew her, vanished suddenly from her father's house, where she was visiting. Maternal tenderness took the alarm, emissaries searched the town, north, south, east, and west, and a young lady was found drowned, and immediately recognised as my sprightly friend. Her father came and recognised her too. In his anguish he asked leave to pray with her alone; and it was only in the act of prayer that his eye fell upon some small thing that caused a doubt; but examining her hair and forehead more narrowly, he found the drowned girl was not his child.

As for her, poor girl, she was young, and had dashed off to Brighton in very good company, and like the rest of her prodigious sex had grudged a shilling for a telegram; though she would have given all she had in the world rather than cause her parents so serious an alarm.

Even in this case calculation enters: the drowned girl, when alive, may not have looked so like my laughter-loving friend. Still we must allow them Doubles, or very near it.

Having thus narrowed the subject, I will now give the reader the most curious case of Doubles my reading—though somewhat rich in such matters—furnishes.

The great Molière married Armande Bejart, a sprightly actress of his company. She was a fascinating coquette, and gave him many a sore heart. But the public profits by a poet's torments; wound him, he bleeds, not ephemeral blood, but immortal ichor, thoughts that breathe, and words that burn, and characters that are types more enduring than brass. The great master has given us in a famous dialogue the defects and charms of the woman he had the misfortune to love. This passage, in which a disinterested speaker runs her down, and a lover defends her, is charming; and the interlocutors are really the great observer's judgment and his heart. The contest ends, as might be expected, in the victory of the heart.

Covielle, alias Molière's judgment: 'But you must own she is the most capricious creature upon earth.'

Cléonte, alias Molière's heart: 'Oui, elle est capricieuse, j'en demeure d'accord; mais tout sied bien aux belles; on souffre tout des belles.'—'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' act iii. sc. 9.

But Armande Bejart entered more deeply into Molière's mind, and but for her the immortal Célimène—a character it will take

the world two hundred years more to estimate at its full value—would never have seen the light. Célimène is a born coquette, but with a world of good sense and keen wit, and not a bad heart, but an untruthful—a pernicious woman, not a bad one. She has an estimable lover, and she esteems him; but she cannot do without two butterfly admirers, whom she fascinates and deceives. They detect her, and expose her insolently. She treats them with calm contempt. Only to the worthy man she has slighted she hangs her head with gentle and even pathetic penitence. She offers to marry him; but, when he makes a condition that would render infidelity impossible, her courage fails, and she declines, yet not vulgarly. This true woman, with all her suppleness, ingenuity, and marvellous powers of fence, whether she has to parry the just remonstrances of her worthy lover, or soothe the vanity of her butterfly dupes, or pass a polished rapier through the body of a female friend, who comes to her with hypocrisy and envenomed blandishments, is Armande Bejart; that is one reason why I give a niche in my collection to a strange adventure that befell her after the great heart she so played with had ceased to beat, and the great head, that created Célimène, had ceased to ache. The widow Molière, after her husband's death, carried on her gallantries with greater freedom, but in an independent spirit, for she remained on the stage, a public favourite; and her lovers, though not restricted as to number, must please her eye. She does not appear to have been accessible to mere ignoble interests. Monsieur Lescot, a person of some importance, President of the Parliament of Grenoble, saw her repeatedly on the stage, and was deeply smitten with her. He had heard it whispered that she was not quite a vestal, and he resolved to gratify his fancy if he could. In those days the stage at night was a promenade open to any gentleman of fashion; but President Lescot did not care to push in amongst the crowd of beaux and actors; so he consulted a lady who had been useful to many distressed gentlemen in similar cases. This Madame Ledoux had a very large acquaintance with persons of both sexes; and such was her benevolence, that she would take some pains, and even exert some ingenuity, to sweep obstacles out of the path of love, and bring agreeable people together. She undertook to sound Mademoiselle Molière, as the gay widow was called, and, if possible, to obtain Monsieur Lescot an interview.

After some days she told Lescot that the lady would go so far as to pay her a visit at a certain time, and he could take this opportunity of dropping in and paying his addresses.

He came, and found a young lady whose quiet appearance rather surprised him. La Molière on the stage was celebrated for the magnificence of her costumes; but here she was dressed with

singular modesty. He had a delightful conversation with her, and one that rather surprised him. She was bitter against the theatre, its annoyances and mortifications, and confessed she felt not altogether unwilling to make a respectable acquaintance, who had nothing to do with it.

In the next interview, Lescot was urgent and the lady coy nevertheless, she held out hopes, provided he would submit to certain positive conditions. Lescot agreed, and expected that a settlement of some kind would be required.

Nothing of the sort. What she demanded, and upon his word of honour, was that he would never come after her to the theatre, nor, indeed, speak to her in public, but only at the house of their mutual friend, Madame Ledoux. The condition was curious but not sordid. President Lescot accepted it, and very tender relations ensued. Lescot was in paradise, and Madame Ledoux took advantage of that to bleed him very freely; but his inamorata herself showed no such spirit; she threw out no hints of the kind, and the most valuable present she accepted from him was a gold necklace he bought for her on the Quai des Orfèvres. She assured him, too, that the intrigues ascribed to her were utterly false, and that what most attracted her in him was his being in every way unlike her theatrical comrades—a man of position and a friend apart, with whom she could forget the turmoil of her daily existence, and the stale compliments of the coxcombs who thronged the theatre.

At this time the works of Thomas Corneille, nephew of the great dramatist, had a vogue which has now entirely deserted them. His 'Circe' was produced, and Mdlle. Molière played the leading part, and astonished the town by the splendour and extravagance of her dresses. Lescot saw her from his box and admired her, and applauded her furiously, and with raptures of exultation, to think that this brilliant creature belonged to him in secret, and came to him dressed like a nun. But this new *éclat* set tongues talking, and Lescot listened and inquired. He learned on good authority that La Molière had two lovers; one a man of fortune, M. du Boulay, and another an actor, called Guérin, whose affections she had stolen from an actress of the same company. Item, that Du Boulay had offered her marriage, but, finding her incapable of fidelity, had retired, and at present she was on discreditable terms with the actor in question.

Lescot, who was now tenderly attached to his fascinating visitor, put her on her defence, addressed the bitterest reproaches to her, and lamented his own misfortune in having listened to her perfidious tongue, and bestowed a constant heart upon a double-faced coquette. She seemed surprised and alarmed; but, recovering

herself, used all her address to calm him; she shed many tears, and declared she loved no one but him, and had kept him out of the theatre for this very reason—that it was, and always had been, a temple of lies and odious calumnies. Lescot was half appeased, but his jealousy being excited, demanded more frequent interviews. She consented readily, made a solemn appointment for next day, and took good care not to come.

This breach of faith revived all Lescot's jealousy, and after waiting for her, and raging and storming for two hours, he could bear his jealous doubts and fears no longer, but broke his word, and went straight to the theatre. As any gentleman could sit on the stage during the performance, President Lescot claimed that right, and sat down upon a stool during the performance of 'Circe.' In this situation, being only one of many gentlemen there, and under the public eye, he managed to restrain himself, though greatly agitated, and at first contented himself with watching to see her start at the sight of him. She did not seem to notice him, however; to be sure, she was warm in her part. At last it so happened that she walked past him with that grand reposeful slowness which is, and always was, one of a graceful actress's most majestic charms. He seized that opportunity. 'You are more beautiful than ever,' he said quite audibly; 'and if I was not in love with you already, I should be now.'

Whether La Molière was in her part and did not hear, or was used to these asides, she paid no attention whatever.

That piqued the distinguished member of Parliament, and he sat sullen till the play ended. Then he was on the alert, and followed La Molière so sharply that he entered her dressing-room at her heels. Her maid requested him to leave. He stood firm and requested the maid to retire, as he had something particular to say to Mademoiselle. Mademoiselle wanted to remove the glorious but heavy trappings of tragedy, so she said rather sharply: 'Say it then, sir. I do not think there can be any secrets between you and me.'

'Very well, madame,' said Lescot bitterly; 'then what I have to say is that your conduct is unjustifiable.' 'What cause of displeasure have I given you?' 'You made an appointment with me; I keep it, you break it. I come here disheartened and unhappy, to learn the reason, and you receive me like a criminal.'

'The man is mad,' said La Molière, and eyed him with a look of haughty disdain, that would have crushed him had he been less sure right was on his side. As it was, though it staggered him, it provoked him more. He confronted her with equal *hauteur*, and cried out: 'You had better say you do not know me.'

Thus challenged, and being aware she knew a great many gentlemen, she looked at him hard and full, not to make a mistake; then she said: 'I don't even know your name.'

Lescot put his hand to his heart, and was wounded to the quick. 'What!' he cried, 'after all that has passed between us! Why, you must be the basest of God's creatures to use me so!'

'Ah!' cried La Molière; 'Jeannette, call some people to turn this man out of the place.'

'By all means,' cried the other. 'Call all Paris to hear me give this woman her true character before I leave the place.'

'Ruffian! you shall smart for this insolence,' said La Molière, grinding her white teeth.

By this time two or three actors and a dozen actresses had come running and half dressed. The disputants, being French, both spoke at once, and at the top of their voices; La Molière declaring this ruffian a perfect stranger to her, who had burst into her dressing-room, and outraged her with the grossest calumnies, the very meaning of which was an enigma to her, and Lescot relating all the particulars of his secret intrigue with her. Detail convinces; and La Molière had the mortification to see by the sniggering of the actresses, who knew her real character, that they believed the gentleman, and not her.

'Why, look!' cried he suddenly; 'the ungrateful creature has a necklace on I gave her. I bought it for her on the Quai des Orfèvres.'

This was too much. La Molière, red as fury, and her eyes darting flame, sprang at him with her right hand lifted, to give him such a box on the ear as she had never yet administered on the stage; but he had the address to seize her wrist with his left hand, and with his right he tore the necklace off her neck, and dashed it to the ground.

Then La Molière called the guard; and, as personal violence is always severely treated in France, the President of the Parliament of Grenoble cooled his heels in prison that night.

(To be continued.)



*He seized her wrist with his left hand, and with his right he tore the necklace off her neck, and dashed it to the ground.**

A Family Party in the Piazza of St. Peter.

BY T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER IV.

A NOBLE ROMAN FATHER.

LUCIA SAVELLI was the only child of Alessandro Savelli and Drusilla Melitta, the latter of whom died, fortunately for her, when her daughter was only five years old. The reader already knows who Drusilla was. Alessandro Savelli was a Roman citizen, and as he insisted on calling himself 'an artist,' being in his own estimation immeasurably lifted above all the rest of the world by either of these qualities, and in a still greater degree above all who were Romans but not artists, and all who were artists but not Romans, by the combination of both of them. He was in fact a cameo-cutter, as his father had been before him. And there have been and are cutters of cameos, who have been and are artists in the truest sense of the term. But there are certain incompatibilities in the way, which are apt to impede a lazy, vainglorious, utterly self-indulgent and indolent vagabond, in his pursuit of high art. And these impediments, representing themselves to the vagabond's own imagination under the guise of 'persecution of fortune,' 'jealousy of contemporaries,' 'conspiracy of the mediocrities to keep down genius,' and general 'decadence of the world,' had reduced the 'Roman artist' to a wretched incompetent mechanic, miserably paid for his slovenly work, when employed at all, and more usually unable to earn a crust by his profession. He would have told you, as he told himself, and anybody else who would listen to him, that he was always ready and anxious to earn his subsistence and that of his family by utilising his talents in any manner that was not 'derogatory' to his social position and his birth; the high requirements of the latter being testified to by an ancient yellow and very dirty parchment scroll, which was suspended against the wall of the den he called his home. This *palladium* bore a long list of names, each surmounted by a carefully painted coronet, and an extra dirty mahogany-coloured thumb-mark near the foot of it, where 'Alessandro, born in 1824,' was shown to be the son of Pietro, and the grandson of another Alessandro, whose brother had been 'Prelato Domestico' to the Holy Father. Now, the special effect of this document was to forbid, as by an unalterable law of nature, that any human being

mentioned in it should ever employ himself in any occupation which involved anything in the shape of muscular exertion, even if starvation were to result from obedience to the prohibition. It permitted a Savelli to hang about the doors of churches or of hotels in the hope of picking up a franc or two from some of the *barbari*, who might wish for information of the kind which may be openly asked for, or for communications of a more confidential character; but it was peremptory against his shouldering a trunk. It made no objection to his clothing his shirtless person in an indescribably filthy and greasy frock-coat; but would have marked him with infamy for adopting a decent fustian jacket. It recognised no line of demarcation between accepting a fee for such 'cicerone' services as those above mentioned and direct unblushing begging; but was clean against blacking a pair of boots. Lastly, it by no means forbade a Savelli to speculate on the profit that the beauty of a daughter 'of the house' might in any way be made to yield. Such were the singular, but perfectly well understood, laws of the 'Savellian Tables;' and Alessandro, the noble Roman artist, acted up to them in the spirit of a martyr.

His sister, the widow Orsola Tortorelli, *nata* Savelli, who lived with him, was also a worthy daughter of the house, and obedient disciple of the mystic parchment scroll, whereon she also was duly inscribed. Her husband had been 'archivista' in the household of a cardinal, an employment the undoubted gentility of which held duly accurate proportion to the exceeding lightness of its duties. But as the remuneration followed the same law of proportion, Orsola, *nata* Savelli, fortunately childless, was left, when the 'archivist' died, utterly penniless. She had thereupon signified to her brother Alessandro, that it was necessary that she should come and live with him and his motherless daughter. Alessandro made no objection to the arrangement. Space in those days—it is another matter now—was an abundant and by no means costly article. There was abundance of it in the garret he occupied in the Borgo Angelico. The archivist's widow possessed a bed. She might bring it to the home in the Borgo Angelico and welcome. Certainly it would be convenient to have somebody to look after the child. And as to housekeeping, Alessandro knew very well that, if he had but the price of a dinner in his pocket, nothing need bind him to carry any portion of it from the 'trattoria' to the Borgo Angelico. Orsola would no doubt find the means of keeping body and soul together somehow; women always did. And probably she would not let little Lucia quite die of hunger either.

Thus the family at the home in the Borgo Angelico consisted of the father, daughter, and aunt. And a miserable 'home' it was

as ever a young creature grew up in. Miserable it had been during all the days of Lucia's childhood; miserable, that is, as far as material misery could make it so. But that was perhaps not altogether *so* far as would seem to be necessarily the case to the ideas of people native to the northern side of the Alps. In the first place, the child-life of the little Lucia was almost wholly a life in the open air; and that air the air of Rome. In the next place, it was passed very much according to her own fancy and volition; two great things towards the attainment of childish happiness. Her education fared better than it might have done had it not been for an old friend of her uncle the archivist, a poor, a very poor priest, who possessed a benefice which afforded him just wherewithal to live. But all that he had to do for this assured though meagre livelihood was to recite his canonical hours, and say mass at a certain altar in a certain obscure little church daily. And as the performance of these duties left a very large number of hours wholly unoccupied on his hands, Don Ignazio Moloni had found a not disagreeable occupation for some of them in teaching the pretty and bright little girl most of all he knew, including at least reading, writing, and a certain very limited amount of arithmetic, together with the rudimentary elements of music.

Then it had come to pass that from a very early age Lucia had begun to earn a little money by her own exertions, if exertion that could be called which consisted only in the exercise of the amount of self-denial and self-control needed for remaining perfectly motionless. In a word, when quite a child, she had begun to exercise the profession—quite a recognised one at Rome—of a model for painters and sculptors. A piece of good fortune, and the rare beauty and perfection of her face and figure and limbs, had led to this preferment. As might be easily guessed from the character of her 'noble Roman' father and her aunt, no very large portion of the remuneration earned in this manner had been permitted to remain in the hands of Lucia for some years. But she had begun to take the law into her own hands in this matter at an earlier age than that at which an English child would have found it practicable to do so. And, though she had with admirable generosity and constancy never failed to devote a considerable part of her earnings to the alleviation of the chronic condition of poverty of her father and aunt, yet the fact of having the command of even the slender pittance which remained to her, had made the later years of her childhood far more tolerable to her than they would otherwise have been.

But with the change from childhood to girlhood another and a far more serious order of trials and troubles had begun for Lucia.

For a Roman girl her development into a woman was not early. But when she was between sixteen and seventeen, Lucia Savelli began very rapidly to grow from a tall gawky girl into a very beautiful maiden. And it was but a very little time before she discovered that difficulties and dangers of a kind undreamed of heretofore were becoming rife around her. Very soon also, alas! she discovered that no aid, protection, or guardianship was to be looked for from those who were her natural protectors. On the contrary, she found, not with that terrible pang at the heart which another girl might be supposed to feel under similar circumstances—because the mode of her life and bringing up had not been such as to foster much of affection between her and her father and her aunt—but with a dreadful feeling of terror, that it was precisely from these ‘home’ agencies that she had the most to fear. Protection against the wiles and temptations of poor suitors, who would endeavour unjustly and fraudulently to possess themselves by dint of cajolery of this newly found property—their Lucia’s budding loveliness—was indeed forthcoming. But when an honest and upright purchaser should be found, really minded to bid for the merchandise, and well able to pay for it, what was there to do but improve the occasion and the good fortune to the uttermost? Virtue! what could a girl in Lucia’s position have to do with such a thing? Just as well be hankering after a carriage-and-pair or a box at the opera. Virtue (in that connection) meant the indulgence of one’s own caprices. And a poor girl, who was not born with any silver spoon in her mouth, could not learn too soon that she could not afford any such fastidious luxury. Nor did it ever occur to the noble Roman and his excellent sister, that there could be any difference of opinion between them and their daughter and niece, as to the proper use which her beauty should be made to subserve. But the elders deemed it exceedingly likely that their Lucia might turn out such an unnatural child as to endeavour to deprive them of any share of the profit to be derived from it.

It was just at this time, when Lucia was beginning to feel desperate, and was returning each night to the home in the Borgo Angelico with a nameless dread and horror in her heart, that she chanced to be seen in the studio of a painter to whom she was sitting—or rather standing—for a Saint Cecilia, by M. Jules Morel, a French sculptor established in Rome. M. Morel’s branch of art consisted mainly in the invention of subjects and the preparation of designs intended for multiplication by the bronzecaster for Parisian drawing-rooms and chimney-pieces. He was just then engaged on a very charming thing—Youth and Age supporting a timepiece between them,—and it struck his ex-

perienced eye that the arm and shoulder that he saw holding St. Cecilia's lyre, would be just the thing he wanted. So a bargain was very soon made, and the girl undertook to be at M. Morel's studio in the Via di S. Basilio the following morning.

And there Lucia's fate for life—and it may be hoped for something beyond—was irrevocably decided, fixed, and settled.

The matter fell out in this wise.

M. Jules Morel, being a gaunt hard-featured Frenchman, with the face of a baboon embellished in the highest style of tonsorial art, of some eight-and-forty years of age, was of course *un homme à bonnes fortunes*. As he had been upwards of twenty years in Italy, he of course spoke Italian fluently, and began at once to talk to the beautiful Roman girl in a style of elegant *badinage*, of which she understood as much as if he had been talking Choctaw. He had had frequent experience of that stupidity which prevents the Italians from understanding their own tongue when spoken without any admixture of their barbarous local dialects, and was not surprised, therefore, at Lucia's slowness of comprehension. The gist of his eloquence, however, in the present case, readily admitted of being supplemented by action; and this commentary he at once proceeded to supply in a very unmistakable manner, to the intense terror and distress of our Lucia; when very suddenly a white-bloused and scarlet-capped man, who had been working at a block of marble in an outer studio, the door of communication with which was only half closed, stepped into M. Jules Morel's inner sanctum, and coming with one stride to Lucia's side, took her, rather rudely it might have seemed, by the arm, with two more strides walked her out of the inner room, and with three more across the outer workshop to the door, which he opened with the hand which was disengaged. Then he spoke for the first time.

'You had better go away from this place and not come back here any more, Signorina. Tell me where you live. I will settle with M. Morel for you, and, if you will permit me, I will call at your home, and let you know the result. Don't be alarmed; I will make it all straight. Borgo Angelico, numéro 47; fourth floor. Very well; I shan't forget. Good day. I will be there by seven to-morrow morning.'

Lucia hardly stayed to say even 'Thank you!' but sped away, and, turning into the first solitary corner she could find, sat down and began to cry passionately. This was so unlike herself, however, that she soon stopped in angry surprise to find herself thus moved. And then she began to think a little of M. Jules Morel, and a good deal of her deliverer from that gentleman. Then she picked herself up, and turned in the direction of the studio of her former

employer, to see whether the preferment of representative of St. Cecilia was yet vacant; thinking so persistently as she walked of the visitor who was to come to the Borgo Angelico on the morrow morning, and of the probabilities that she might be disappointed by his not coming at all—(yes, it would be a disappointment, there was no denying that)—that, to her extreme surprise, she found she had missed her way. What *could* she have been dreaming of—she who knew so well every step of the ground? However, the false turn was soon remedied; the author of the St. Cecilia had not yet succeeded in supplying her place; never having tried, indeed, but fully intending to wait till his first-rate and cheaply paid model should be able to return to him; and Lucia was soon again holding her lyre, a somewhat less fancy-free St. Cecilia than she had been before her adventure.

Meanwhile Carlo Carena—for the reader need hardly be told that the workman in the white blouse and the scarlet cap was no other than he—was left to settle scores with the utterly astonished and no little indignant M. Morel. That, however, did not turn out to be so difficult a matter as might have been imagined.

Carlo returned to his block of marble in silence, waiting for any remark which his employer might see fit to make. And the latter had thus the advantage of a minute or two, in which to estimate how greatly discretion might be the better part of valour on this occasion. What with a very lively apprehension of the awkward habit the Romans are supposed to have, of being unpleasantly ready with their knives; and what with a keen perception of the mischief it would do to his interest to quarrel with his workman, M. Jules was not disposed to push the quarrel *à outrance*, or indeed to make a quarrel of the little incident at all.

‘Do you know, Signor Carlo, that you were very near making me angry?’ he said in a species of *lingua franca* (meaning here a very *free* language indeed) which habit had taught the workman to comprehend. ‘Thank heaven, I controlled myself; for when I am angry, I am terrible, see you? When once the blood mounts up to the brain, my faith! I answer for myself no longer. But why didn’t you tell me that la Signorina Lucia was a friend of yours? How should I know? Jules Morel is not the man to wish to poach on another’s preserves. Faith! he has no need to do that! Bah! let us respect the sacred rights of the heart. But you should have told me that you had a prior title to the little one.’

‘I never saw the girl in my life before,’ said Carlo very quietly.

‘*Comment, donc!*’ cried M. Morel, speaking in French, and staring at Carlo with very genuine surprise; ‘you don’t know her! then I must say, Signor Carlo—’

'*Scusi, Signore*, don't say it. Remember how terrible you are when you become angry. *Don't* become angry. There is nothing to be got by it. Didn't you see that the girl did not like your way of making yourself agreeable to her? And it's dangerous work meddling with our Roman girls against their will. You would be having a knife between your ribs one of these evenings as you were coming home from the Caffè Greco, from her father, or her brother, or her lover. What's the good of getting into hot water? Trust me that it is better as it is. *Non è vero?*'

'Well, perhaps it is. Only, you know—— But I dare say you are right. The first fellow in the street may pick the girl up, for aught I care. There was nothing so special about her. There are plenty of fish in the sea a deal better than *that* catch, any way. Bah! I shall think no more about it.' Nevertheless it may be surmised that M. Jules *did* think more about it; and that his feelings towards his workman were not rendered more friendly by the incident.

And that was the way in which Lucia Savelli and Carlo Carena first became acquainted.

CHAPTER V.

'CORPUS DOMINI.'

MORE than twelve months had passed between the date of the little adventure in M. Morel's studio, which had so important a bearing on Lucia's destiny, and the June morning on which we left her waiting with her friend in the Piazza di S. Pietro for the coming forth of the grand Corpus Domini procession. And in the course of those twelve months Lucia and Carlo had become all in all to each other—and more literally and exactly so, than in most cases in which the phrase is used. Carlo Carena—the only son of a tenor and a soprano, who had earned a little fortune by hard work and then had lost it all by an ambitious assumption of the part of impresario of a company of singers, and had died broken-down and broken-hearted within a few months of each other—Carlo Carena was absolutely alone in the world. Lucia was, as has been seen, much worse than alone. And what might have been her fate, had it not been for the timely accident which gave her such a protector and friend, it is dreadful to think of. As it was, Carlo was her guide, her instructor, her protector, her counsellor, her refuge. Her lover he was, and her husband he was to be, of course. That admitted of no sort of discussion or shadow of doubt. But as for the when, nothing, alas! seemed clear upon this point, save that the *when* could not be *now*. It was not

that either of them would have shrunk from facing the world together upon the very limited and precarious means of finding bread and shelter which was before them. But marriage at Rome without the consent of a living father was a difficult thing; in the case, indeed, of a girl in her teens, an impossible thing. And the noble Roman absolutely refused to hear of his daughter's marriage with a workman in a blouse, who was not even of noble blood, and who was as poor as a church mouse, with little prospect of ever being any richer. But besides these reasons, which (however absurd they may seem to the reader, when urged by a father in the social position of Alessandro Savelli) did not appear altogether unreasonable to the world in which that noble Roman lived, there was at the bottom of the heart of Alessandro and of his sister a bitter resentment against this stranger—this impudent workman, who had thrust himself into their lives, with the result of exceedingly jeopardising, if not altogether destroying, the hopes of profit to be got (in an honourable way, if might be; if not, in some way or other) out of that rare bit of property of theirs, Lucia's now magnificently developed beauty. Still, the father and aunt had by no means abandoned all hope of making this sole trump card in their hand win the game for them yet. Carlo had thus far with infinite caution and forbearance continued to avoid any open quarrel with Signor Alessandro and the Signora Orsola, his sister. He had contented himself with vigilantly watching over Lucia, carefully frustrating, often without appearing in the matter himself in any way, every attempt to place her in situations of peril, and being ready at a moment's notice, should the urgency of the case require it, to resort to any means, however violent, for rescuing her from any position of real and imminent danger.

As to the less abominable hopes, which Signor Savelli had at one time nourished, of feathering his nest for once and all by means of a rich son-in-law, Lucia herself was instrumental in driving him to more criminal designs, by utterly refusing to lend herself to them in any way. It was easy for a father to prevent his child from marrying against his will, but not so easy to compel her to marry against hers. And, as I have said, if Carlo had not been there, there is no knowing what might have happened. As it was, nothing had happened as yet save the generation of a great deal of bad blood, and ill will, and bickering, which made poor Lucia's home more painful than ever to her. And this was the state of things when Lucia and Carlo, while waiting for the procession, had the conversation recorded in a previous page.

The others of the party had been abundantly occupied the while in observing the preparations for the show, and in that sort

of talk on the part of those who had before witnessed it, which such experienced people are wont to indulge in on similar occasions at the expense of their less well-informed friends.

The procession of the Corpus Domini at Rome is, perhaps, the most splendid ceremony of the Church as far as mere spectacular effect is concerned. All ecclesiastical Rome takes part in it—at least, all those portions of the ecclesiastical world which can either add *éclat* to the show by their high rank, or contribute to the effect of it by the strikingness of their appearance. Thus the Pope himself, and all the Cardinals, and other dignitaries innumerable—‘Masters in artibus, Bishops in partibus,’ as poor Barham sang—and prelates of all grades take part in it; and the enormous proportions of the huge procession are increased by bodies of the monks of all the orders represented in Rome, black, white, brown, and parti-coloured in wonderful diversity. The mere preparations for the passing of the procession are a sight to be seen. The whole of those enormous semicircular colonnades of Bernini are hung with rich scarlet draperies, with the armorial bearings of the Cardinals emblazoned on them; and the effect of this magnificent display of colour is truly superb. Where the colonnades come to an end, at the spot where the circular Piazza of St. Peter’s opens into the space called the Piazza Rusticucci, an awning is erected which conducts to a vast tent erected in the latter space, beneath which the ceremony of the adoration of the Holy Sacrament, the carrying of which is the theoretical purpose of the procession, takes place. And then the vast body of dignitaries, monks, friars, &c. &c., stream back again to the huge church under the opposite semicircular colonnade.

It was at last nearly time for the head of the procession to issue forth from the church. The position which Lucia and Ninetta had selected was a very favourable one, permitting the party to catch a distant view across the Piazza of St. Peter’s of the procession as it emerged from the doors of the Basilica, and then again to see it in detail, and close at hand, as it defiled past the spot where they stood. All the little party were more or less excited by the expectation of the coming show. Ninetta was in a high state of delightful enthusiasm, both from anticipation of the coming pleasure, and still more so from the exceeding enjoyment of her pre-eminence as the only one of the girls—little Clelia counted for nothing—who had seen the sight before, and who was therefore entitled to do the honours of the day to her companions, just as if the whole affair were her own, and the Pope and the Cardinals and all the rest of them prepared and got up by her especial orders, and for her particular behoof. Little Clelia was

speechless with awe and expectation, her entire contentment with the occasion and all its surroundings being to some small degree marred by a misgiving lest the Pope, when he passed by, knowing well, as he of course did, all the sins of omission she had been guilty of in the matter of sweepings imperfectly performed and the like, should single her out by name and administer some crushing reproof to her there and then before all the whole world. If such a thing *should* happen, she felt sure that Nanni would have to carry her out of the crowd fainting. As for Nanni himself, he was in a perfect state of enjoyment. He had nothing at the present moment to do; he had a variety of gay and pleasant sights before his eyes; he was tranquilly and not at all impatiently expecting a further gratification to his curiosity; and though last, by no means least, he was standing in close proximity to Clelia. He did not make use of the opportunity to speak to her much. It was quite sufficient for his enjoyment that he was close to her. His father Tancredi stood patiently staring around him. He had come out for a holiday, and thought that he was enjoying it. But the real fact was that his thoughts were away among his droves of buffaloes and of horses, and that he would, in truth, have been happier—though he would have been much surprised to be told so—had he been there in the flesh also.

At last, when it was within a few minutes of the time, a certain undulatory movement was visible in the crowd, a space was in some unaccountable way cleared, and a handful of mounted soldiers passed briskly towards the steps of the church with much clatter and jangle. They were a small party of French dragoons, to whom some duty of keeping the line, or forming in some way a part of the show, had been assigned, and who, with the ostentatious indifference to the convenience or wishes of the Romans which marked their sojourn at Rome, as it has always marked their sojourn in every country that has known the misfortune of it, were on their way thus late to take up the position allotted to them.

Ninetta, as the men rode jinglingly past the end of the colonnade where our little party of friends were stationed, became visibly much excited. She flushed crimson all over her fair white forehead, up to the roots of her lovely blonde hair. Her lips parted in a pleased yet half nervous smile, and her breath came quick and short. She was in such a state of trepidation, that even Tancredi Melitta and Nanni observed it, and stared at her.

‘Oh, Lucia!’ she exclaimed, plucking her friend’s dress, ‘that’s *he*; do look! I wonder whether he will see me? Doesn’t he look grand on his horse at the head of his men? It seems odd, doesn’t it, but I never saw him before on horseback. He sits in

his saddle just as easy and noble-looking as if it were an arm-chair. Now he is looking this way. He sees me, he sees me !'

And Ninetta, in an inexpressible flutter, began telegraphing and kissing her hand to the officer riding at the head of the dozen or so of troopers ; no 'grand captain,' as she had in her ignorance boasted, but a young sub-lieutenant—one Hector de Rampont by name—a good-looking young fellow enough, though perhaps a more competent or more experienced eye than that of our poor little Ninetta might have failed to discover, either in the face or bearing of the man, any of that 'nobleness' which her fancy-stricken eyes saw in them.

It was quite true that the officer had caught sight of Ninetta. Making his horse deviate a step or two from his direct course, till he was within speaking distance of Ninetta and her party, he cast a haughty and supercilious glance at each member of the latter, and then, leaning down from his saddle, said in what purported to be a whisper, but was in fact perfectly audible to them all :

'To think of finding you, little one, in the midst of all this *canaille*. Be sure you don't move from here when the job is over, till I come to look for you. I shall be able to get away immediately afterwards, and I will come here directly. Be sure you don't stir, or you'll get lost in the crowd, you little darling.'

And so, with another offensively supercilious stare at Ninetta's companions, he turns his bridle, and leads his men to the place destined for them in the neighbourhood of the church.

'Well, if those are the manners of officers with gold lace on their coats, I had rather live with poor devils in sheepskins,' said Nanni, looking after the departing officer with no kindly expression.

'*Figliuolo mio*,' said his father, 'he is but a Frenchman ; you can't expect the *barbari* to have Roman manners. It is probable that he knows no better.'

Ninetta turned from one to the other speaker with an angry toss of the head, dilated nostrils, and a quivering lip, that showed that indignation was struggling in her with a strong disposition to burst into tears.

'Oh, uncle, how can you talk in such a way ! I am quite sure the French officer meant no offence. Different people have different manners, you know. Why should we expect French people to look and speak and move just like us ?' said Lucia, trying hard with her eyes to make her uncle and cousin understand that they were distressing Ninetta by their remarks. Then whispering to her friend, 'Never mind what they say. What does it matter ? Uncle always says a deal more than he means. You'll see, he'll think no more of it.'

‘But it was not kind of him to speak of my *damo* in that way,’ remonstrated Ninetta, pouting and all but bursting into tears.

‘*Figliuola mia*, how should I know it was your *damo*? I would not ha’ said a word if I had known. But if I had a daughter——’

‘Look, look!’ cried Lucia, glad to seize on the diversion offered by the procession, which just at that moment began to show itself emerging from the open doors of the church; ‘there it comes; I can just see the first banner—now—now—coming through the great door.’

All eyes were instantly and anxiously turned in the direction of the church; and the unlucky incident, which had threatened to mar the harmony of the little party, was happily lost sight of in matters of more immediately exciting interest.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROCESSION.

It was curious to observe the stilling effect which the first appearance of the procession, so long waited for, exercised on the vast crowd that now densely thronged the piazza; strange too to note how very quickly, how almost simultaneously, every unit in the vast multitude became aware of the commencement of the expected show. There had been a good deal of noise in the piazza. It was a different sort of noise from that which would have arisen from a similarly assembled English crowd. There was no shouting, no voice raised in anger, and—special difference of all—no laughter. But every human being of the thousands there was talking, and the product was an enormous buzz, which, heard at sufficient distance for the general effect of the whole, and not the particular effect of any portion, to be appreciated by the ear, went up in a great roar. And this roar was stilled utterly, as by a sudden striking dead of all the vast multitude, when the first banner was dimly visible a few feet within the great door, and then clearly visible as it passed the portal and emerged into the outer sunlight.

It seemed as if the procession, like some strange and huge monster, crawling, flexible, as an enormous python, were issuing out of the darkness of a great cavern. But presently far glimmering specks of light, capriciously moving, could be distinguished at greater distances within the cavernous depths, as the component parts of the monster procession were forming themselves into order within the church. The procession is not, however, completely and definitively formed into the order in which it will proceed to the Piazza Rusticucci till it commences to defile from the

gallery at the foot of the great stairs of the Vatican. For the Pope and the Cardinals do not come from the church of St. Peter's, but from the Sistine chapel in the Vatican.

At the spot specified, the senior cardinal deacon, fully robed and with his mitre on his head, takes his seat between the Governor of Rome and the first papal Majordomo. The Cardinal has a rod in his hand; and so superintends the formation of the procession, while the Pope is saying mass in the Sistine chapel. When the mass is finished the Pope takes his place on (or in) that peculiar machine, invented and constructed for this special purpose, which is so contrived that the Pope, when raised with it on the shoulders of the trained men, who carry him during the procession, presents the appearance of one kneeling in front of a fald-stool, and holding the ostensory which contains the Holy Sacrament aloft in his hands. In fact he is sitting, and a support is contrived for his hands. It would indeed be very fatiguing, and probably impossible, for an aged man to remain in the required position for so long a time as the duration of the procession; and doubtless quite impossible for most men to continue for such a time the position of the hands with the ostensory in them. Hence the necessity for that arrangement which Carlyle in a well-known passage characterises accurately enough as doing scenic worship with a pasteboard tail. The pasteboard tail is of course covered with the enormously long train of the embroidered white satin mantle, the due and effective arrangement of which is the care of the first master of the ceremonies, to be performed with his own hands when the Pope at the end of the mass takes his place in the machine, and is ready to start on his journey. By the time he is brought down, the cardinal deacon has got all ready for a start, and the procession begins to move; every individual in it carrying a wax candle in his hand, and singing a special form of service, composed for this occasion, to the due recital of which a bonus of fifty years' indulgence is by special bull attached.

The procession is opened by a troop of soldiers; and at the sides of it, at small intervals, the Pope's runners, dressed in black with short laced surplices and purple cassocks, and with silver maces in their hands, see to the maintenance of regularity and good order.

After the soldiers comes a huge cross borne aloft. Immediately after it walk in their black gowns, two and two, the children of the Apostolic Hospital of St. Michael. Next come the children of the Papal Foundling Hospital in white dresses. Then come all the monastic bodies, those of the mendicant orders first, each society preceded by its own huge standard,

Those of the third order of St. Franciscans come first, thus occupying the position of greatest humility, precedence in a procession being arranged by contraries. The bare-foot Augustines come next, with their leathern girdles and large rosaries hanging thereto by their sides. Then the long-bearded Capuchins, with rope girdles and rosaries. Nine other mendicant varieties follow, the last, *i.e.* the most honourable, place being reserved for the Dominicans.

Did the reader ever chance to see a procession of mendicant friars? It is a sight often to be seen on less magnificent occasions and scenes than those of the Corpus Domini at Rome, and it is a very remarkable one for any body who has a Lavaterish eye, or any phrenological notions. The shaven scalps of the bareheaded figures show the character of the heads and faces to the greatest advantage—or disadvantage, as it would be more accurate to say. And, with singularly few exceptions, the collection of revoltingly low types is quite extraordinary. From the almost idiotic expression resulting from the poor starved brow, flattened head, and receding chin, to the thin lips, eager eye, and conically-shaped skull that marks the fanatic; from the malignant scowl indicating unmistakable hostility to all the world outside the cloister gate, to the pinched fox-like physiognomy telling of petty spite towards all within it; and from the utter vacancy of simply animal existence, to the heavy jowl, gross pendant lips, and undeveloped forehead of the mere brutal sensualist, every most repellent variety of human type will be observed among the heavily draped figures, so listlessly dragging their lazy limbs in the long crawling line. Here and there a face and head may be seen that tell absolutely nothing; never one that indicates aught of elevation, or spirituality, or nobility. In truth, how should there be such?

Next after the various-coloured bodies of mendicants come the non-mendicant monastic bodies, Cistercians, Olivetans, Benedictines, &c.—‘black spirits and white, brown spirits and grey.’ The members of these bodies are invariably, looking at the body as a whole, less disagreeable-looking than their mendicant fellows.

These are followed by the huge cross of the secular clergy of Rome, the pupils of the Pontifical seminary immediately after it, and behind them the priests of the fifty-four parishes of Rome.

After them troop the canons of nine different capitular bodies. Certain small differences are observable in their costumes, indicating to instructed eyes particular privileges, or immunities, or specialities of rank, the grants of this or that Pope to the body thus evidencing them, and the special object of pride and self-admiration to the possessors of bulls conferring such privileges,

Next come the chapters of the four minor basilicas, and then those of the three principal churches dignified with the title of patriarchal basilicas, *i.e.* Santa Maria Maggiore, St. Pietro in Vaticano, and St. Giovanni Laterano; the place of honour and precedence being thus reserved to the Lateran Church, which boasts itself to be '*omnium ecclesiarum mater et caput*,' even over the chapter of St. Peter's. Each of these chapters is preceded, or followed, or accompanied by mace-bearers, and beadles, and standard-bearers, and a huge canopy of red and yellow cloth, under which the special relics preserved by the church to which each chapter belongs are carried. Every chapter has also an immense crucifix borne aloft and attended by a sacristan carrying a bell, which is rung every now and then 'to admonish the spectators to venerate the ensign of our redemption, or to invite them to stand out of the way, and let the procession pass.' Every chapter has its bell; but the chapter of the Lateran, for greater and special dignity, has two.

Then comes the Vice-Governor of Rome, in full episcopal costume, with all the members and attendants of the court of the Cardinal Vicar.

Then follow all the members of what is termed the '*Cappella Pontificia*,' which means what in the case of a lay prince would be called 'his court.' They are all duly enumerated and distinguished according to their proper precedence, and their varied costumes, in various works on the Pontifical ceremonies. But they are far too numerous for their titles to be rehearsed here, especially as whole columns of Ducange would be needed for the understanding of many of them.

There are 'abbreviators of the greater park,' in purple silk cassocks, and large torches in their hands; auditors of the Holy Roman Rota; Apostolical subdeacons; 'masters hostiary of the red rod;' Archimandrites with lace and gold fringe, and thirty other bodies of persons or individuals, all with strange titles and gorgeously arrayed. Then come the cardinal deacons, followed by the cardinal priests, and lastly the cardinal bishops. And every cardinal has his long train carried by a trainbearer, and is attended by his household, and escorted by Swiss guards in their well-known mediæval costume. The three 'Conservators of the Roman people' in purple and gold come next. Then the Senator of Rome, with purple mantle, whose huge train is borne by two pages. The title of this last grandee always seems to me to be invested with a sort of ironical 'Last of the Mohicans' or 'skeleton of the regiment' sadness. *The Senator of Rome*—all that remains of such a Senate!

Then comes the Governor of Rome, quite a different thing, it will be observed, from his predecessor the Senator. The Senator is

a layman. But this latter, the Governor, is an ecclesiastic, as he who 'governs' in Rome naturally must be. And next to him marches the 'Principe assistente al Soglio,' one of the Roman princes who has the duty and the privilege of standing by the side of the Papal throne on all occasions of high ceremony. He is clad in an ordinary black coat, but has a mantle fringed with lace, and carries, like all the rest, a lighted torch.

Next come two high officials bearing censers with incense (we are nearing the culminating point now), and attendants bearing the vases of incense. Then the two first of the Papal masters of the ceremonies, followed by two Papal runners with silver maces, and then

PONTIFEX MAXIMUS,

the Pope—the Holy Father—'Servus servorum,' the servant of the servants of God—the successor of St. Peter—the Vicegerent of Christ upon earth.

He is borne aloft on the shoulders of men, in an apparently kneeling attitude, as has been said; and on either side of him are carried the immense white feather fans—*flabelli* the technical name of them is—carried by two of the private chamberlains, with two others of their colleagues at their side, to relieve them turn about in the work of carrying these strange and huge insignia of Papal state. Over the head of this 'Servus servorum' is carried a large canopy of cloth of silver with flowing draperies adorned with the Papal arms, and richly ornamented with embroidery and lace and fringe of gold. The eight poles which support this canopy are borne from the Sistine Chapel as far as the first landing-place of the stairs by prelates in purple cassocks and mantles; thence to the vestibule of St. Peter's by the pupils of the Austro-Hungarian College, in red cassocks; thence half way along the colonnade by the pupils of the Propaganda, in black and red cassocks; thence to the end of the colonnade by the pupils of the English College, all in black; thence as far as the door of the Accoramboni Palace by the pupils of the Irish College, also in black; thence to the convent of the Scolopi fathers, by eight priests appointed by the master of the ceremonies; thence all along the colonnade on the left the canopy is borne by representatives of the Florentine nation in full court dress; and from the end of the colonnade through the gallery on that side, which brings the procession back again to the church, the poles are taken in hand by deputies of the Sieneſe nation (for Siena was once upon a time counted as the capital of a 'nation' of its own); from them the pupils of the noble Papal academy receive the canopy, which is carried by these latter half way up the nave of the church; and there the Magistrates of

Rome take it, and carry it to the foot of the Papal altar, where the procession finally terminates.

As soon as the scholars of the Austro-Hungarian College have got him on their shoulders, the guns at St. Angelo open fire and continue to roar at minute intervals till the procession has re-entered the church on its return. And all the bells ring out a triumphant peal; in a very inharmonious and jangling manner, however—for, curiously enough, artistic bell-ringing is to be found in England alone of all the world. A crowd of other attendants surround the Pope, among them the physician-in-chief to his Holiness, and his chief chamberlain; these two alone of all the procession not carrying torches, 'in order that they may have their hands free to assist the Pope should any sudden emergency require it.' With them walk a 'secret sweeper in cassock of serge with purple silk girdle, and laced with stripes of velvet with a border,' and the Pope's butler in an ordinary black coat. The members of the Papal choir also walk round the pontiff, singing the hymn *Lauda Sion*. Lastly the Apostolic protonotaries—the three tufted prelates; that is to say, the Auditor-General of the Reverend Apostolic Chamber, the Treasurer-General, and the Prefect of the Apostolic palaces—and the generals of the monastic orders, close the ecclesiastical part of the procession. The rear is brought up by as large a show of military as the Papal resources can furnish.

One part of the ceremony, due to the care of an official who does not appear in the procession in person—the Pope's gardener—must not be omitted; for it adds very materially to the picturesque effect of the whole scene. The entire route over which the procession has to pass is thickly strewn with bay and other fragrant leaves, agreeable to more than one of the senses.

Such was the procession which the immense crowd in the Piazza had assembled to see. It was almost wholly a Roman crowd. For the vast numbers of foreign visitors, who throng the Eternal City in the winter and spring, and crowd to the Christmas and Easter celebrations, have almost all hurried off to the north, before the dog-days bring the great festival of Corpus Domini with them. A few old Roman *habitues* who have learned to do at Rome as Romans do and live as Romans live, a few foreign artists who have made Rome their permanent residence, remain. But speaking generally the 'forestieri' may be said to have all gone their various ways, and to have left, during the summer months at least, Rome to the Romans, to live their own lives according to their own devices—devices which are, with respect to most matters appertaining to the conduct of life and the method of enjoying it, very different from our devices.

(To be continued.)

Finding his Level.

BY JAMES PAYN.

WHEN a man emerges from the crowd of his fellows and climbs many degrees in the social scale, it is only the bigoted and uncharitable who deny his merits. If he becomes offensive, given to purse-pride or mock humility—the Scylla and Charybdis of ‘self-made’ men—he is of course intolerable to everybody except the worshippers of wealth at any price; but if he keeps clear of these dangers, he is not only admitted into the upper circles, but it is generally allowed that he by right belongs to them; that, though in a lower station of society, he was intended by nature for a higher, and as soon as opportunity occurred sprang like a bent sapling to his proper station. There is a phrase in the Church Catechism which has been perverted to imply that everybody is to be content with his position in life, and not to seek to rise above it; but the most church-going people are free to confess that nature places some of us too low at first in the social scale, who indeed prove the fact by quickly emulating the sparks in flying upward. It is so far to their credit, since certain obstacles have to be overcome, but they are simply fulfilling a law of their being.

Although this is allowed, strange to say the converse is never admitted. Every one who is placed by the accident of birth among the higher classes is expected to stop there, and concluded to be fit for his position; while to give it up is reckoned disgraceful. This want of logic is only to be paralleled in the cases of those who hold that evil thoughts, even though they bear no fruit, are almost as bad as evil deeds, and yet who assert at the same time that the Infernal Regions are paved with good intentions. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: and if it is no good to intend a good thing which doesn’t come off, it is no harm to intend a bad thing that after all comes to nothing. Similarly, if it is not unusual for persons to find themselves in a lower sphere than they feel themselves fitted for, nor wicked in them to change their places, why should it be strange to find low-class people among the higher grades, or disgraceful in them to drop down into positions where they feel at home and comfortable?

One of the disadvantages of an hereditary aristocracy is that vulgar dukes or scampish lords cannot sink out of sight into a lower and more congenial social atmosphere; which is ridiculous,

when even clergymen are now allowed to get rid of their orders. This anomaly is to no class more evident than to the tutors at our universities. The flower of our British upper-class youth come under their personal supervision, and they have perhaps the best opportunity of discerning the peonies from the roses. If they had only the strength of mind to inform a parent that his young Hopeful had better go to the Backwoods or the Bush, instead of attempting to cut a figure in polite society, things would be made much more comfortable for everybody, but especially for the lad himself. As matters stand, he naturally brings discredit on the order to which he belongs by birth. Generally, to begin with, he 'marries beneath him,' as it is called, though indeed this is scarcely possible; and even, by rare good fortune, it sometimes happens that the girl of his choice, being honest and sensible, and suiting him in other respects much better than a fashionable bride, turns out to be his salvation. It is still more rarely that the poor fellow finds his level in an easy and natural manner; his 'connections' and the conventional opinion of 'Society' making his downward course as difficult as boulders in the bed of a descending stream.

John Weybridge, of Gresham College, Cambridge, was a man of this class, with whom, as his tutor, I had had as little communication as tutor and undergraduate well could have, even in a small college; but in the end I was fated to know something more of him, which it seems to me, as bearing upon a considerable social question, it is worth while to tell. One great advantage to the readers of this narrative is that they will not have to listen to any account of the hero's ancestors. Fortunately for them—or, as I honestly believe, for him—he had none living. He was placed in my hands, as it is sometimes called—though indeed I did not touch him with my finger-tips—by his uncle and guardian (who himself died within a year or so of our introduction), and I was informed by him that he had no other near relation. But, for all that, he had been brought up like other young men of the upper middle class, and enjoyed all their educational advantages. He had been at more schools indeed—and very expensive ones—than it is usual for young gentlemen to go to, on account of the difficulty that was experienced in what may be called his acclimatisation. To set him down to Greek plays and Latin verse was indeed about as reasonable as to catch an adult North American Indian, and endeavour to interest him in the 'Eastern position,' whether the Turkish one or the Ecclesiastical. I don't think that even 'the Tone' so boasted of by our public schools did poor Weybridge much good: for his was one of those constitutions that rejected tonics. Of course when he was at home he passed his holidays in the

stable: but that is nothing. About one-half of our adolescent aristocracy are worshippers of the horse—their favourite cult is spelt with an *o*—nor do they always succeed in even becoming ‘*Gentlemen Jockeys*,’ but Weybridge’s nature inclined yet a step downwards. He was ‘horsey’ only to a limited extent; his moderate means probably conduced to this; but from the top of his bullet-head to the sole of his backsliding feet he was ‘doggy.’ His playthings as a child must have been bull-pups, and as he grew older he only discarded them for the full-grown animal. Who that is acquainted with our universities but knows the class, and the inseparable link that connects it with the canine family? I think I see the young fellow now: a well-built man, broad in the shoulders, low in the forehead, thick in the neck, tight as to his legs—altogether, what is called by physiologists ‘a fine animal’—and with a bulldog attached to each of his heels. They sometimes attached themselves to other people’s heels, or wherever they could lay hold of them. His college cap was always battered; he broke it over his knee when it was new—a sort of act of defiance of collegiate authority, as knights used to break their swords in sign that they owed no longer fealty; only this poor lad had never known what fealty was. In his mouth was a short pipe, which it was the one business of his life to ‘colour;’ and it is fair to say that he succeeded in it. It is said, and justly, that it is well for all young people when they evince any particular taste; when they have a pursuit of their own—what in a lady’s case is called ‘an object in life;’ and John Weybridge possessed this. He was ardently attached to the Art of Self-Defence. In this respect he was born behind his time, which is allowed to be a great misfortune. Nobody under the rank of a peer can now indulge in cock-fighting (even then there are murmurs against him), and it is almost as bad to patronise the Prize Ring. There were Professors of the Noble Science still at Cambridge, but of course without university endowment. Indeed, the academical authorities looked very much askance at them; and it must be allowed that the few ministers of this ancient superstition who yet lingered amongst us were not calculated to please the academic eye. Broad in the shoulders, in the forehead ‘villanous low,’ thick in the neck—in fact, except that they dressed in fustian and corduroys, and wore billycock hats, they were, every man jack of them, John Weybridges. One of the most ridiculous notions that were ever entertained, was, that it was unnatural for this poor fellow to consort with them, and a proceeding which demanded pains and penalties. It might just as well have been represented to the common duck that it was not to join other ducks, or paddle about in dirty water. For my own

part, I pitied the young man whenever I saw him in my lecture-room (which was not often), and should have thought it very cruel to put him 'on' in Thucydides or Euripides. He looked so very, very, very much out of his element.

The only classical literature he ever studied was 'Boxiana, or the Oracle of the Ring,' an Homeric record of great English battles, which I believe came out at that time in monthly numbers (but quite independent of the periodicals published by the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge). It was from this great work, I fancy, that he derived his notions of spelling; since in a written reply to a question respecting the Digamma, he spelt it thus—'Die gamer,' and seems to have attributed to it some sort of heroic significance. The only Latin quotation with which I have any reason to suppose him to have been acquainted was *Nunquam dormio*, which is the motto of the famous sporting paper 'Bell's Life.' I do not deny that he possessed information, but it was of so peculiar a kind, that, in all the wide range of subjects selected for our present competitive examinations, I doubt if it would have gained him a single mark. He knew the least and greatest number of rounds by which Dutch Sam had gained his victories, and also how much Molyneux (a black boxer, I believe) weighed—down to an ounce—before each encounter.

As to the more modern heroes of the Ring, he was (very literally) hand and glove with them; and had, when an undergraduate, the honour of entertaining 'the Tipton Slasher' for a week, when on a professional visit to the Eastern counties.

Of course I only acquired this knowledge of Mr. Weybridge's mode of life from hearsay, but I did get some practical corroboration of it from a complaint that was made to me officially by his college bedmaker, and which I believe to be unique in its way. She found a difficulty in cleaning his apartment from the fact that he had had it laid down with turf¹ instead of a carpet, for the greater convenience of his 'set-to's' or sparring matches. If poor John Weybridge had been a man of acres, this method of furnishing might have been set down to eccentricity in a 'landed' direction, and therefore one not altogether to be reprobated; and at all events his mode of life would not have injured his material interests; but, as matters were, it wanted a good deal more money than he could afford. His little fortune—doubtless with the best intentions—had been largely trenched upon with the view of giving him a good education; it had been squandered in the

¹ I remember a somewhat similar case, where a very unpopular young gentleman, having left his rooms for the day, found them turned into a vegetable garden—two feet deep of earth planted with onions; but then *he* had given no orders to that effect.

futile attempt at making a silk purse out of a sow's ear ; whereas, if he had been taught only to read and write and chalk up a score upon a board, his guardian might have set him up in a public-house in a grassy neighbourhood, and felt that he had done his duty by him. It is true he could only read and write and cipher, as it was, but the attempt to teach him other things had been as costly as though it had succeeded, while it had also given him habits of extravagance. I have reason to believe that this young gentleman spent almost all his slender patrimony during his university career, and had nothing to show for it beyond half a dozen genuine bull-terriers, and one doubtful St. Bernard. There was never a more clear or a more literal case of a man's going to the dogs. To be sure he had secured the friendship of the Tipton Slasher, and one or two other eminent members of the Prize Ring ; but it is doubtful whether the bond between him and them was strong enough to bear the pressure of adversity ; if he had had a public-house settled upon him, as I have suggested, they would have stuck to him, and he would have had his friends around him from first to last. But, as it was, poor John Weybridge, Esq., became as friendless as he was penniless, and eventually 'went under,' and was heard of no more.

The memory of him alone remained, and still smelt and blossomed in certain university circles, where the ferret and the badger are held in as high honour as the crocodile and the Brahma bull among the natives of the East. For, to do him justice, the man was honest after his kind, and would have made an incorruptible stud groom of a racing stable, or as a publican would have sold his beer as it came from the brewer ; and indeed, I may say generally of doggy men—so far as they have come under my special notice—that they are on the whole less given to deceive than horsey men, perhaps from the absence of the necessary acuteness. Besides being honest he was brave, or at all events possessed that attribute of evil omen to him, so far as his educational career was concerned, called 'pluck.'

I remember an adventure of his which put his courage beyond question, and at the same time illustrated the close connection that existed between himself and the canine race. There was a certain granary in Cambridge so infested with rats, that for some time they had made the place almost useless for the purpose for which it was designed ; but just as Whittington found his cats a mine of wealth by sending them to a foreign market, so did the proprietor of this establishment derive advantage from his rats at the hands of some very exceptional customers. Mr. Weybridge, and some young friends of similar tastes, purchased at a high price the

rights of sporting over the granary floors, and the rats were allowed to have their fill like pheasants in a preserve, in return for the amusement they afforded. On one occasion battle had been arranged for, the principal apartment had been 'baited' with a fine supply of grain, the rats had fallen to, and then the holes of egress had been stopped up. It was computed that about six hundred rats were indulging a false confidence, and getting too fat to live in Mr. Miller's granary. Mr. John Weybridge was not altogether, it seems, deficient in imagination; for, picturing in his mind's eye this charming scene, and himself in the middle of it, the temptation of anticipating the treat which should have been by rights reserved for self and friends proved too great for him; he resolved to enter upon the adventure alone—save for the company of his favourite and inseparable black-and-tan terrier Jacko. It was a selfish as well as an ambitious act; and, like Julius Cæsar, grievously did our hero suffer for it. Waking, no doubt, from heavenly dreams of gigantic rats and 'varmint' dogs, he took his way early in the morning of the proposed battle to the scene of action, opened the granary door, let himself and Jacko in, and turned the key behind him. He had a handy bludgeon, and Jacko had (at that time) his teeth, and these were all their weapons. So soon as the two allies appeared the six hundred scuttled away to their holes, and found them stopped; then they turned round (rattled), stood at bay, and finally attacked their assailants; their motto was no longer *Sauve qui peut*, but 'Death to tyrants.'

Mr. John Weybridge used to describe the attack of the rats as little inferior in audacity to the Balaclava Charge, which, by a curious coincidence, consisted, it will be remembered, of the same number of assailants. They flew at him and Jacko, tooth and claw, and both man and dog must have felt that their work was cut out before them. With the second blow of his bludgeon, Mr. John Weybridge killed Jacko. Under ordinary circumstances he would have thought considerably less of killing a human fellow-creature—such as a 'Bargee'—and the sad mischance for the moment overwhelmed him. Even in that supreme moment, with angry rats holding on to him everywhere, and climbing up him in all directions like flies, a pathetic thought passed through his mind. He knew that the dog was dead (for he never hit anything twice), and he resolved to have him stuffed. He did not know at that time how small was the chance of his ever being able to pay that last sad tribute to his faithful companion's memory; but after ten minutes of hot combat, during which he laid about him like a Paladin, and with all the fury of revenge, he began to fear that his foes were very literally 'too many for him,' and, fighting as he

fled, he retreated to the door. But the key which, in his desire for solitary slaughter, he had turned, was rusty, and refused to move, and, in his desperate efforts to release himself, broke in the lock. It seemed that nothing remained for him but to sell his life as dearly as he could, and that that granary would prove his grave. He still fought on, but his war cry was now 'Help, Help!' which he uttered with every blow he struck. He was bitten in a hundred places; his clothes hung on him like rags, and the rats hung on him too; some of them about his very ears. It was scarcely possible to imagine a more terrible death than seemed to await him. Many men would have succumbed to the very horror of their position, independently of the loss of blood which would have exhausted a less powerful frame; but John Weybridge stuck to his work, like the rats themselves, and was eventually rescued—only just in time. Some early risers, hearing his cries, broke in the door, and found him half dead, though fighting still, with his dead dog beside him, but not—no, 'not the six hundred.' He had killed about a third of them, and the other four hundred would have certainly killed him but for that timely aid. It was the only occasion on which he was ever known to confess that he had had enough of rats.

It was nearly ten years after John Weybridge had left college, and three generations of undergraduates had almost swept the recollection of him from my mind, before I set eyes on him again. He had quitted Cambridge without a degree—in fact, had made no efforts to obtain one—and every Gresham man had lost sight and sound of him, when I came upon the poor fellow in a wholly unexpected yet very commonplace fashion. I was bound one afternoon for Cambridge from London, but had the misfortune to miss my train at the Great Eastern Station; it was then called Shoreditch, and a very unattractive spot it was, especially as regarded its refreshment-room; indeed I think it had none, or I could otherwise have hardly gone elsewhere, in such a neighbourhood, in search of a midday meal, which I certainly did. I found a rather large and tolerably clean coffee-house hard by, and, walking into the public room, sat down and ordered a mutton chop. The man who took the order was a head waiter of the ordinary type, consequential, grave, and evidently with a weight upon his mind like a bishop who is thinking of throwing up his temporalities for conscience' sake; but the man who brought the chop was John Weybridge. I felt sure of this at once, though his white tie and black attire gave him the appearance of a sporting undertaker, and the napkin on his arm suggested an infant funeral job; broad as ever in the

shoulders, low in the forehead, thick in the neck—I looked down quite naturally at his heels for the brace of bull-dogs; they were not there, of course; but I still kept my eyes upon the carpet from motives of delicacy. I thought it would be very painful to him that I should seem to recognise him, and I was casting about in my mind as to what I should say, and how I should perhaps be able to give him some little assistance in his fallen fortunes: for being a Gresham man—though I could hardly have called him an old pupil—he had obviously a claim upon me. To my surprise and relief he was, however, the first to speak.

‘I hope I see you well, Mr. Dactyl.’

‘Quite well, Mr. Weybridge. And you?’

‘Never better, sir. Indeed, I may say, never so well.’

There was so much significance in his tone, that I knew at once that he was referring to the suitability of his present mode of life, so I had no hesitation in referring to it.

‘I am sorry things have not gone well with you, in a material point of view.’

‘Well—thank you, Mr. Dactyl—but I am not sure that I myself am sorry. The work here is hard at times, but not always, and one enjoys one’s holidays all the better—as I have heard you say—when one has work to do. The neighbourhood is very lively [I knew he meant ‘sporting’] and there are some good fellows with whom I feel quite at home. We have our Sunday out, and the half-holiday movement is a great boon to us. And then, except in business hours, one needn’t put on any company manners, which of course is a great comfort.’

I could not help smiling at this, for, to say truth, he had never greatly inconvenienced himself in that way; he understood what my face meant at once.

‘Ah, sir,’ said he, ‘you don’t know what it is to feel like a fish out of water, as I did all my life until my money was gone, and I found myself in my proper position. I can enjoy myself now in my own way without bringing discredit on anybody. Of course I regret the money that has been thrown away upon my Greek and stuff—you remember my *μη*, heaven, *γένοιτο*, forbid; and my *μεγας*, *μεγασα*, *μεγαν*, I dare say.’

‘Yes, my dear Mr. Weybridge,’ said I, smiling, ‘and also your difficulty about the Persians with their variegated trousers—as to which word in the original stood for that famous people, and which for their garments; I am afraid we didn’t do you much good at Gresham.’

‘Well, sir, to speak frankly, not one halfpenny-worth. I

wasted my substance in hard words and soft living; but there, that fight is over, and the sponge is thrown up. Let us say no more about it.'

There was a manliness about him that went home to one's heart far more than any complaining would have done.

'If you are in want of any material assistance, Mr. Weybridge,' said I, 'I hope you will allow your old college tutor——'

'Nay, sir, nay,' interrupted he quickly; 'you are very kind, but I need nothing of that sort. I have enough for my requirements, and even keep a couple of dogs' (he pronounced the word 'dawgs,' as he always used to do) 'that I will back, for rats, against any two in Christendom. If I could have foreseen this meeting I would have kept you a tarrier pup——Coming, sir, coming.' This last remark was in answer to a cry of 'waiter!' from a distant table, which I perceived he treated in quite a professional way; that is, instead of waiting, he was the cause of waiting in other people.

'Well,' said I, rising from my seat, 'though you refuse to let me be of any material service, Mr. Weybridge, there must be something surely that I can do for you. Can I send you any books?'

'Oh dear, no,' answered he precipitately; 'I have had quite enough of *them*. The *Sporting Times* of a Sunday is as much as I can get through in the way of literature. But there *is* something; I *do* miss the old Gresham Audit Ale, and that's a fact. If you would send me half a dozen?'

'You shall have half a dozen dozen by Saturday,' cried I, 'or my name is not Decimus Dactyl.' And so, with a hearty handshake, tutor and pupil parted. I sent him his ale, of course; and he replied in a few words of thanks, the spirit of which excused the spelling. I have never set eyes on him from that hour; but the memory of our last meeting abides with me. I see him now waving his napkin in sign of farewell, and, though his thoughts were on my going away, crying 'Coming, coming' to the other man; a picture that had its pathetic as well as its humorous side.

But I have seen scores of men at College since who remind me of John Weybridge, and who certainly had no more business there than he.

An Amateur Assassin.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY has graphically recorded the experiences of an English opium-eater, and Théophile Gautier has almost as well described the sensations of a French eater of Hashish; but, as far as I am aware—and my researches have been tolerably extensive—no non-professional Englishman has hitherto noted down the results of experiments made with the latter drug. In ‘Monte Christo,’ as most persons will remember, Dantes, the hero, on more than one occasion makes use of it. The effects, as described by Dumas, were, however, of so surprising a nature that I considered them to be simply the creations of the novelist’s imagination; until, on reading some fragmentary works by Théophile Gautier, I stumbled upon an apparently veracious description of a visit paid by the author to a certain ‘Club of the Hashishins’ in Paris. This discovery, bringing to my remembrance the circumstances related by Dumas *père*, particularly impressed me; and I determined, so soon as I should have found out a little more about the matter, to experimentalise in the character of an amateur assassin on my own account. It is, I suppose, scarcely necessary to explain that the word ‘assassin’ originally meant nothing more than an eater of Hashish; that, in a more confined sense, it signified a follower of the fanatic brigand, the Old Man of the Mountains, who gave the narcotic to his disciples in order to prime them for the execution of his projects; and that it is only by the natural association of these two ideas that the word has become synonymous with a stealthy murderer. For my own part, I cannot imagine a dose of the drug producing either murderous proclivities, or any other incitements to violent mischief; but doubtless, like opium, it acts in different ways upon different persons.

The Hashish of the Arabs is only, as far as I can discover, the resinous exudation of the *Cannabis Indica*, or Indian Hemp plant. Perhaps, before being used, this resin may be mixed with some saccharine matter in order to hide its naturally bitter taste; and possibly, in some localities, the stalks of the plant may be chewed in their raw state: but a reference to sundry works on *Materia Medica* convinced me that the peculiar properties of the preparation, whatever it may be, reside solely in the resin, and that the *Extractum Cannabis Indicae* of the British Pharmacopœia would suit my purpose quite as well as any other form of the drug. The

extract I made use of for my experiments was prepared in the orthodox way by the maceration for seven days, in four pints of spirit, of one pound of the flowering tops of the female plant, the result being pressed and the mass distilled, and afterwards evaporated, by means of a water-bath, to the consistency of thick treacle. The colour was a very dark olive green, and the taste slightly, but by no means nauseously, bitter.

A further consultation of medical works made me come to the conclusion that English doctors know very little about the drug. Doctor O'Shaughnessy, who may be said to have introduced it into this country, saw marked results in a Hindoo who had swallowed less than half a grain of the extract; but in England he had given ten or twelve grains with impunity. Doctor Fronmuller, indeed, considered that eight grains of the extract was the smallest useful dose for a European; but Doctor Garrod and others were of opinion that a much smaller quantity was sufficient for most persons. Puzzled by this disagreement of the doctors, I felt justified in beginning operations very cautiously, and in taking only a quarter of a grain of the extract to commence with. Dumas represents Dantes as unconcernedly administering half a tea-spoonful, and Gautier himself leaves his readers to infer that he took a somewhat similar amount at the 'Club of the Hashishins.' I am not aware how much Mr. B. Taylor took at Damascus; but, had I put my trust in Doctor Fronmuller or in Alexandre Dumas, and boldly swallowed eight grains to begin with, I am convinced that no second dose would have been necessary, and that my experiments would have speedily come to an untimely end. My first attempt was ineffectual, and no true symptoms appeared until I had, by slow degrees, materially increased the dose; so that several days elapsed before my object was attained.

One evening, after I had taken a grain and a half on the previous day, I swallowed two grains of the extract at eleven o'clock, up to which time I had been smoking since half-past eight. I had before that period eaten a substantial dinner: and, after the dose, I resumed my pipe and smoked and wrote until half-past one. I was engaged on some involved statistics, but I found my brain to be perfectly clear, and I wrote with unusual speed and facility. At half-past one I desisted from work, and, feeling no effects from the operation of the drug, I took a pill containing three-quarters of a grain of the extract made up with liquorice. I then went upstairs and read in bed for a hour, when, as I felt drowsy, I extinguished the light. Although I was drowsy, I was by no means anxious to go to sleep. I was drowsy, inasmuch as thought about business matters, or, indeed, about anything in

particular, was irksome to me; but I was not in the least sleepy, for I was not a bit inclined to close my eyes. In this condition I lay for some minutes, feeling supremely comfortable and immensely contented with myself, until at last the action of the Hashish began to manifest itself.

The earliest symptom was a consciousness of abnormal, or rather of absolutely preternatural, clear-headedness and capacity for reasoning. I became more than doubly sensitive. Sight, hearing, and especially feeling, were wonderfully acute, and I seemed, if I may use the expression, to be living rather than simply existing. I also experienced a most delightful sensation of slightly increased warmth over the whole body, with the exception of the stomach. I felt as though I had just left the hot chamber of a Turkish bath, or as though I were sitting in the sun on a hot August day. I experienced, too, a *soupeçon* of 'pins and needles' in the extremities. It was no more than the merest *soupeçon*, but it was sufficient to impart to the general pleasure just that dash of pain which is necessary to make the former absolutely perfect. Nothing more luxuriously delicious than this passive condition can be possibly conceived. I could have bestirred myself, but I would not: and gradually, like the colours of a waning rainbow, earth and the things of the earth died away from my mind and were forgotten. The moon shone full in at my window, and my eyes were open: but I only saw in imagination. Like shadows on a mist, but far more real, soft dreams of beauty slowly rose before me; soft dreams in which I took a part, and stood amid the phantom children of my brain. Now I was wandering in a sunlit glade, beneath whispering trees in which the birds were singing more sweetly than a choir of nightingales. Now I was standing on a cloud-set peak, and gazing, like a monarch, on the world of rivers, fields, and forests far below; and now I flew up—up through endless space, and drank the wine-like ether of the stars.

I felt that I could no longer be mortal. There was really no longer anything mortal about me: I was simply a spirit. I believe indeed that at this stage I should have proved almost insensible to pain; at all events, I absolutely forgot that I possessed such a thing as a body which was lying in bed, and breathing the smoky atmosphere of London.

In my room hangs a copy of Huskisson's picture, 'O come unto these yellow sands:' and to my mind that picture became a reality. I, with the sea-nymphs, was bathing in the night-spray on the golden beach; I heard their songs and their laughter; they spoke to me; I was their boon companion. Thought

appeared to have become fact, so startlingly vivid was every impression, and so natural was every circumstance. After a time, during which hundreds of visions rapidly succeeded each other, the spirit of my dreams changed. Hitherto my brain had been poetical: now it became wildly absurd. Everything seemed to be irresistibly comic, and every thought assumed a comic guise. Life was a grand joke, and the mere idea of existence made me laugh boisterously. I was really laughing too, for the tears rolled down my cheeks. I could not help it, for everything was so unutterably absurd and humorous. Now a ragged brace of crook-nosed cronies danced a fantastic witches' frolic in front of me and made the most extraordinary grimaces; and now a duck, with a bill at least a yard in length, positively burst out into a broad grin and warmly congratulated me on the comicality of life. I absolutely laughed myself into a perspiration. My brain seemed like the stage of Drury Lane Theatre during the performance of a harlequinade. It was all springs, trapdoors, laughter-provoking faces, and rampant absurdity, continually moving and continually changing. Then everything would fall together, like the fragments in a kaleidoscope, and whirl round in a furious blaze of colour till I was quite dizzy. Thought—that is to say, connected thought—had become impossible, unless by a vigorous effort I awoke myself for a moment. But the quick succession of visions was too amusing and too enthralling for me to desire to avoid it. I gave myself up entirely to the influence of the Hashish: I could only lie passively. Little ugly imps, red-faced, active, and gleeful like the hobgoblins of German fairy tales, clustered round me, offering flowers and scents. Everywhere laughter seemed to echo. Now I felt my legs once more; but they were heavy. My feet were transformed into pyramids of lead on which I imagined myself to be standing. For a moment I could not move. Should I remain thus for ever like the pyramids of Gizeh? Then I became a tree, of which my legs were the curiously twisted roots, my arms and head the branches, and my body the trunk. Birds came and settled on me; the wind whistled through me; I felt the sun shining. Suddenly there was a new alteration, and I became a fantastic giant, half flesh and wood, and half iron, and of immense proportions. My breath was a sulphurous flood of smoke: I was pleased with my power; and breathed and roared like a mad steam-engine. Again I dwindled to my natural size, and floated gently through the night air to a huge and brilliantly lighted cavern, in which wonderful strains echoed from a large organ that stood at the further end in the dim distance. Gnomes and imps dressed in bright colours were the audience: immense

moths, with jewelled wings and eyes like emeralds, clung to the diamond stalactites of the dark gold-seamed rock above; and delicious perfumes were wafted to me from the cool depths of the cave. But it was the music that particularly charmed me. In comparison with other music it was as reality to a map. It was inarticulate speech; it was natural painting. It described love, hope, sorrow, and despair; it depicted beauty, absurdity, and ugliness. Never, until that moment, did I know the power of sound; never, until that moment, had I heard music that deserved the name.

I need not further chronicle these wonderful hallucinations. My memory is full of them; but were I to write for a week I could not describe the hundredth part of the visions which so rapidly succeeded each other. All were entirely disconnected from the rest and perfectly distinct: all were equally vivid: all afforded me equal pleasure. Ultimately I went to sleep, and next morning awoke as hungry as a starved hound, and feeling as well as I had ever felt in my life. There was no lassitude, no headache, no nervousness; nothing of any sort unpleasant.

Doctor Pereira calls Hashish a soother of pain, a narcotic, an intoxicant, and a sudorific. Bentley and others say that its general effects are similar to those of opium, but without the dryness of tongue, constipation, headache, and loss of appetite consequent upon the administration of the latter. I agree in the main; but I cannot say that with me Hashish causes no dryness of the tongue. When I am under its influence I feel dryness both of the tongue and of the lips: and this fact remained unaltered on one particular occasion when, during the period, I took frequent draughts of ale with the object of removing the symptom. On recovering, I am invariably refreshed and very hungry; and never have experienced the slightest imaginable inconvenience from the use of the narcotic, except the dryness. From this it must not be gathered that I have habitually eaten Hashish, for such is not the case. For experimental purposes, and once or twice only from motives of curiosity, have I indulged in it; and I believe that its continued use would be as destructive to the nervous system as is that of opium. Although the various preparations of the hemp plant are used as narcotics almost all over the world, it does not appear that English doctors know enough about the peculiarities of *Cannabis Indica* to be very willing to use it, except in mild doses for one or two special disorders. I have no doubt that to a man suffering, say, from rheumatic fever, a dose would be of great value both as a soother, a sudorific, and a narcotic: and I believe that in certain forms of hypochondria it would work wonders, for

it takes one's thoughts away from one's self at the time, and provides food for a certain amount of thought in the future. In England, however, it may almost be said that it is never employed to produce pleasant hallucinations except occasionally in cases of *delirium tremens*. Most medical men, even those who have not tried it, will agree that Hashish is capable of exerting powerful and astonishing effects as a narcotic; but the majority of the profession is frightened by the uncertain and varying action of the drug, and discards *Cannabis Indica* in favour of opium. The objection doubtless has great weight in it, for the physical and nervous constitution of the patient, and more particularly the quality and quantity of what he eats, drinks, and smokes, suffice very materially to influence the results of a given dose; but, on the other hand, it may be reasonably urged that this necessary disadvantage is one which, perhaps in a less degree, is shared by opium; and that it is practically increased by the very variable quality of the Hashish obtainable in this country. As I have already noticed, it is to the resin that the plant owes its peculiar properties: and it is stated that only plants grown in the East, and particularly in India, produce this resin in any quantity; although botanists agree that the species employed is in fact identical with the common hemp. This conclusion seems to make it certain that the locality and temperature in which the *Cannabis* is grown immensely influence the potency of the resultant extract. In India the leaves and stalks are at certain seasons covered with resinous exudation, which, according to Pereira, is collected by men in leather dresses, who run rapidly through the hemp-fields until their garments are thickly coated with it. There must therefore be considerable exudation; but Doctor Christison, who once grew some hemp in Edinburgh for experimental purposes, reported that his plants produced no appreciable amount of it. The inference, thus strengthened, is borne out by the circumstance that, in India and the East, the plants of certain definite places are particularly sought after; Nepaul, Herat, and Persia being the most celebrated of these localities. Probably, therefore, if uniformly good hemp were obtainable in England, the extract as a medicine would have a fairer chance of obtaining the popularity which, I am sure, it deserves.

Subsequent experiments with Hashish showed me that a similar dose always produced a similar effect, provided that I were not disturbed. My pulse, which is ordinarily about sixty-six, rises to a hundred and ten or a little more; and my pupils become considerably dilated during the time that I am under the full influence of the drug. To one friend I have administered rather more than

two grains of the extract a couple of hours before dinner, without effect; and to another I have given a grain and a half with most marked results. I find in my own case the best method of becoming thoroughly influenced is to take my dose an hour and a half before a heavy meal. The effects then supervene immediately after eating, and generally last for nearly a couple of hours.

Were the Ancients, I wonder, acquainted with the virtue of the drug? Herodotus, a notorious liar, says that the Scythians used to throw cannabin seeds on hot stones, and enjoy the aromatic vapour until exhilarating effects were produced. The seeds are, unfortunately, not narcotic; and the historian probably mistook the flowering tops of the plant for them. But Doctor Royle, with some plausibility, suggests that when Helen in the house of Menelaus gave Telemachus '*Nepenthes*,' she administered some preparation of Indian hemp which she had received from an Egyptian. Galen and Dioscorides declared that the juice of the seeds was an alleviator of pain in the ear; and several of the old medical writers quote the assertion with approval.

Such is Hashish; a sweet giver of delicious oblivion; a generous parent of delightful dreams. Under its influence the poet becomes a Dante, the artist a Doré, and the musician more than a Handel or a Mozart. And yet it is said to have made the disciples of the Old Man of the Mountain bloodthirsty; and, in the form of *Bang*, it actually does afford to Orientals a prompting to the commission of any and every crime. Perhaps I am not of a violent nature: certainly I have no inducement to commit a murder; and probably a man's inborn tastes in a great measure direct the effect that Hashish will exert on his physical and mental faculties. Could the amateur assassin remember the sublime poetry, the heavenly harmonies, or the wonderful pictures that crowd into his brain, while he lies, overcome by the luxurious influence; and were he able to commit them to paper and to canvas,—I can quite understand that he might ensure for himself temporary fame, if not absolute immortality; but anything more foreign to the effects of the drug than the 'creation of unpleasantness,' either in thought, word, or deed, I cannot conceive.

W. LAIRD-CLOWES.

Juliet.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

CHAPTER XXV.

ERNESTINE'S REVENGE.

‘But, Madame!’

‘It is of no use your saying any more, Ernestine. I tell you I have quite made up my mind; here is your month’s wages, and you can have the cart to take your box to the station to meet the four o’clock train.’

‘But, Madame, to send me away like this after so many years! it is unjust, it is infame!’ stammered poor Ernestine, almost in tears. It was in Mrs. Blair’s little morning-room, after breakfast, that this conversation took place. ‘Have you no fault to find with me, Madame, and yet to send me away like this?’

‘Yes, Ernestine; it is because Mr. Lamplough says you are impertinent to him——’

‘Aha! so it is ce gros Monsieur who does this for me!’

‘That is not the way to speak,’ answered her mistress angrily. ‘I wish that Mr. Lamplough shall be spoken of with the greatest respect in this house—and, my good girl, I will give you a first-rate character; you will easily get another place.’

‘It is not that, Madame,’ answered Ernestine indignantly; ‘certainement, that I shall get another place I am not at all afraid; but it is the cruelty of Madame to send me away like this after that I have served her for seven years, and done so many things for her which no one else could do; it is Madame who will suffer, not myself.’

‘Very true, Ernestine,’ almost whimpered Mrs. Blair; ‘I don’t know how I shall manage without you. But I can’t help myself. Do go, like a good girl, without a fuss.’

‘Is Madame then determined to sacrifice me, an old servant, an old friend like me, to Monsieur—Monsieur Lamplou?’

‘I *must* send you away, Ernestine—don’t look so savagely at me——’ For Ernestine, whose southern blood was well up, stood looking almost menacingly at her mistress. ‘Here, go upstairs and get that black silk dress with the bugle trimmings I had last winter. I will give it you, Ernestine; and for goodness’ sake let us part friends,’ added Mrs. Blair, almost imploringly.

‘Bah!’ exclaimed the girl, with a little snorting laugh of con-

tempt, 'what do I want with your old black silk dress that is all frayed at the flounces, and worn to holes at the sleeves! keep your dress, Madame—*je m'en fiche bien!* and I go, Madame, as you order me; but remember,' she added, turning round at the door and looking back at her warningly, 'remember that you will be very sorry for this; you will perhaps wish, some day, you had not turned Ernestine out of the doors like a *chien!*'

'Most impertinent!' exclaimed Mrs. Blair, rising from her chair, trembling with passion; but Ernestine had already left the room.

With a beating heart the girl ran along the passage. She had talked lightly but the day before, it is true, of leaving Mrs. Blair's service, but it was a very different thing to be thus turned away at a moment's notice from the house which had been to her a very comfortable home for so many years. And then Ernestine had always thought that Mrs. Blair would do something substantial for her when she left—give her a sum of money sufficient to enable her to start a shop, or to buy the goodwill of some dress-maker's business. Nor had her expectations been altogether unreasonable.

During the course of her seven years' service, Ernestine had done many things for her mistress which did not come strictly within the duties of a lady's-maid.

There was that little incident of the letter, for instance; and there had been many little watchings and spyings, and faithful reportings of overheard conversations; in all of which transactions Ernestine had staunchly adopted Mrs. Blair's interests as her own, and had carried through the little intrigues demanded of her with the utmost discretion and with a secrecy which, considering her sex and her class, was perfectly miraculous.

Mrs. Blair had frequently hinted to her that some reward for these many faithful and valuable services would one day be in store for her.

'When you want to marry or settle down in life, Ernestine, you will find that I shall be your friend,' she had said more than once to her; thereby raising many hopes in her attendant's bosom—hopes which had now been so cruelly and ruthlessly blighted.

Running along the passage, she all but tumbled into the devoted James's outstretched arms.

'Whither away?' said that gentleman poetically—quoting from the last number of the penny journal which he had just been studying.

'Ah, do not stop me, Monsieur Jams! I must go and pack my boxes.'

'Pack! why, who's a-going away?'

'It is I myself!' cried Ernestine, pointing tragically to her chest. 'I go—I am sent away this very day—I know not where I shall repose myself this night! Alas, my poor Jams! you may well look au désespoir, for here you see a terrible instance of the ungratefulness of those we serve. Madame has sent me away!'

'Sent you away, Mam'zell!' stammered James; 'what for?'

'Ah, you may well ask,' said she, shrugging her shoulders; 'car, moi, je n'en sais rien. I know not—it is what I have told you, it is ce scélérat Lamplou.'

'Old Lamps! what has he had to do with it?'

'He does hate me—he is going to marry Madame, and he is determined to ruin me.'

'I'm blessed if I'll brush his clothes or black his old boots any more!'

'But I blame not him!' said Ernestine, spreading out her hands with fine Christian magnanimity; 'I blame not him—it is only an animal! but it is Madame who does turn me out, it is she who has made me the blood to boil. Mais je m'en vengerai!' added Ernestine between her teeth, and clenching her little brown fists savagely. 'Don't you stand staring like that; go and order the cart to take me to the station, and let me go upstairs,'—and with that she brushed quickly past her dismayed admirer.

Half-an-hour later Ernestine was in her little attic room in the midst of her disordered wardrobe, with all her worldly goods around her on the floor.

Ernestine sits on the ground in front of her trunk, turning the key in a little common cedar-wood money-box, the contents of which we have looked at before.

Inside she first deposits her month's wages, just given her by Mrs. Blair, and then carefully counts over her savings. Twenty-three pounds seven shillings and twopence—not much, thinks Ernestine ruefully, on which to begin life afresh. If that were all! but then, fortunately, that is not all. Ernestine's money-box holds another valuable object which she thinks is as good to her as a cheque on the Bank of England.

Turning rapidly over the yellow bundle of French love-letters, the faded bunch of shrivelled violets—the gift of the dead soldier lover—which even at this moment she remembers to raise hurriedly to her lips, and the case of jewellery which she reflects can be pawned or sold if the worst comes to the worst, she comes upon a small flat parcel in silver paper at the bottom of the box.

'Aha!' says Ernestine aloud, with a triumphant smile, 'te voilà, mon ami! you have waited long enough, but now at last you are

to be of some use to me. This is what comes of a little prudence and forethought; another, less wise, might have spoken of it before! What a good thing I did keep him all this time!' And with a chuckle of delight Ernestine slipped the paper into her leather purse, which again she placed securely in an inside pocket of her black hand-bag; then locking up the money-box again, she packed it up in her trunk.

A few hours later the French lady's-maid had turned her back for ever upon Sotherne Court and the old life that had become so monotonous and yet, by force of long habit, so familiar and so homelike to her.

Juliet Travers was sitting alone in her little morning-room. The writing-table was covered with the morning's unanswered letters, bills, notes, invitations, of all kinds and sizes; her pen was in her hand, but she was not writing.

There was on her face that bitter, hopeless expression which had become so familiar to it of late, and which had replaced the old eager, impulsive look which had once made it so singularly attractive.

The very droop of her head, the languid fall of her nerveless hands, the set scorn in her full red lips, all told the same story of the eternal battle going on within—the battle of pride against a hopeless love.

In front of her lay a monogrammed note highly scented with patchouli.

It could not be called a love-letter, and yet there was a spirit of adoration and devotion in every line. Juliet took it up and read it over:

I see nothing of you now; you are so surrounded by new friends, that you don't seem to care for your old ones. What have I done to offend you that you are so cold and distant to me of late? twice when I have called you have denied yourself; dear Mrs. Travers, there must be some cause for this change in you.

I want to get up a water party to Maidenhead for you. Choose your own day and your own party—any one you like. We will row up to Cookham and back in the cool of the evening to a late dinner at Skindle's.

I have enlisted Mrs. Dalmaine in my cause, for you refuse to do anything that I ask of you now, and perhaps she will persuade you. Don't be so cruel as to refuse me this.

Yours devotedly,

GEORGE MANNERSLEY.

'I suppose I must answer it,' said Juliet aloud, as the note dropped wearily from her fingers; 'what a bore this sort of thing is! I used to find these parties and flirtations rather amusing a little time ago. I used to fancy they distracted my mind and

took off my thoughts; but now I think they only make me worse. No: I really cannot go—Lord George is so wearisome; and since he has taken to this lover-like frame of mind, and reproaches me for neglect—for neglect of him! what a joke!—he is really quite insufferable. Here is some one to interrupt me. Come in!—who is there? Ah, it is you, Rosa; good morning!’ and Mrs. Dalmaine, in a deliciously fresh toilette of palest pink muslin, entered.

‘My dear Juliet, have you heard from Lord George this morning? because I have.’

‘Yes, I was just going to answer his note. Here it is;’ and Juliet calmly handed the note to her friend, who read it through with great interest.

‘How *devoted* the poor man is!’ she exclaimed; ‘and you really have behaved very cruelly to him, poor fellow! Well, what day are you going to fix? and whom are you going to have for the party? It must not be till next week, I think—at least, I have not a free day before, and I suppose you are going to allow me to come!’

‘My dear Rosa, how you jump to conclusions!’ said Juliet, laughing. ‘I am just going to refuse it altogether.’

‘To refuse!’ exclaimed Mrs. Dalmaine aghast, sinking down into a low chair, and throwing up her little pink-gloved hands in dismay. ‘Impossible, Juliet! what can you be thinking of? Why, I made so certain of your going, that I stopped at Madame Dentelle’s on my way, and ordered a boating suit on purpose!’

‘I am very sorry, Rosa; but you can easily stop on your way back, and counter-order it.’

‘But, Juliet, you must be mad. It would be the very jolliest thing of the whole summer! I had settled it all; we would have just two boatfuls—six bachelors and six married women—no girls, they are always a nuisance. It would be the greatest fun; we wouldn’t have anybody slow—all our own set, you know. You would enjoy it so much. You never will be so stupid as to refuse!’

‘I am very sorry to disappoint you, Rosa,’ said Juliet a little coldly, ‘but I have not the least intention of going. Such parties always get women talked about; one gets called fast, and perhaps worse.’

‘Yes, by slow, spiteful women, who never get a chance of any fun themselves!’ said Rosa, with a toss of her head.

‘No, not only by women: I don’t believe that men—nice men—think any the better of one for doing those sort of things.’

‘But last year you did just as fast things. Don’t you remember that day at Richmond—only you, and I, and Lady Withers, and all those men?’

‘Yes, and I was very sorry for it afterwards; but I think very

differently now about things; and besides, in any case your party would not do for me, because I have asked my young sister-in-law, Flora Travers, to stay with me; and I could not take her to that sort of thing, could I?’

‘Oh, if you are going to take up with bread-and-butter girls in their teens!’ pouted Mrs. Dalmaine.

‘Don’t be jealous, Rosa,’ said Juliet playfully; ‘you know I am not given to “taking up,” as you call it, with anybody.’

‘No, only with that horrid Colonel Fleming. I believe *he* is at the bottom of this proper fit that has come over you; he always seems to think everything wrong, and looks daggers at me, as if he thought I was a shocking bad friend for you, and was corrupting your morals.’

‘Very likely he is right,’ said Juliet dryly; and, dipping her pen in the ink, she began to write: ‘but I had rather not hear you abuse him. He is an old friend of mine.’

‘Yes, so I have heard you say before’—and there was a little silence between the friends, during which Juliet wrote away steadily, refusing Lord George Mannersley’s invitation; and Mrs. Dalmaine bit the end of her parasol, and looked as cross and ugly as a pretty little woman can look when she is in a bad temper.

‘I am sorry for your disappointment, Rosa,’ said Juliet presently, as she leant back in her chair and fastened up her note. ‘You must not think me unkind, and I will do anything you like to make up for it. Would you like me to give a dinner at Hurlingham?’

‘Well, yes, that would be rather nice,’ said Rosa, softening a little, and reflecting that nothing pleasant or profitable could accrue from prolonged sulks. ‘Of course it depends upon who your party is.’

‘Well, I would have any one you wish for, only I will get Cis and one or two husbands, if you don’t object much,’ said Juliet, laughing. ‘I won’t ask yours!’

‘Heaven forbid!’ ejaculated Mrs. Dalmaine fervently.

‘And of course I must have little Flora Travers.’

‘And will you ask Lord George?’ asked Rosa a little timidly.

Juliet laughed. She had knowledge enough of the world to know how readily a ‘bosom friend’ will pounce on an admirer out of favour.

‘Oh yes, by all means, if you care about him—you are quite welcome to him,’ she added a little scornfully.

Mrs. Dalmaine flung herself on her knees at her friend’s side and kissed her rapturously.

‘You darling! you really are a brick, Juliet; and don’t you really mind my flirting a little wee bit with him?’

‘Not the least in the world!’

‘One thing more, Juliet—you won’t go and ask that solemn old Colonel of yours, will you? he would quite spoil all our fun.’

‘I have not the least intention of inviting Colonel Fleming,’ said Juliet rather coldly, pushing back her friend’s rapturous embraces. ‘I don’t think he would enjoy himself in the very least in *our* set!’ she added with a bitter scorn that was quite unintelligible to her hearer.

A knock at the door, and the footman entering announced that ‘a young person’ wished to speak to Mrs. Travers.

‘The dressmaker, I suppose,’ said Juliet, rising. ‘Post these letters, William, and tell her to come upstairs: I will see her here.’

‘I am sorry to turn you out, Rosa, but I have a good deal to do this morning, and I must get this dressmaker’s business over as quickly as I can; I will call for you to drive at five o’clock. William, open the door for Mrs. Dalmaine, and then ask the young woman to come up.’

And Mrs. Dalmaine went.

‘One minute, Miss Richards,’ said Juliet, not looking up from her writing-things, as the door opened, and the rustle of a woman’s dress announced the entrance of the ‘young person.’ ‘Wait one minute, please, and I will attend to you.’

‘Madame?’ said a hesitating voice behind her with a pure Parisian ring which certainly did not belong to honest little Miss Richards.

Mrs. Travers turned round with a start.

‘Ernestine!’ she exclaimed in amazement, ‘what has brought you to town? has Mrs. Blair come up, or—you look very strange—is your mistress ill?’ she added hurriedly.

‘No, Madame; Madame Blair is quite well, or was so yesterday morning when I last saw her.’

‘Then, what have you to say to me, Ernestine? You look very uncomfortable standing there by the door—won’t you sit down?’

Ernestine did indeed look strangely nervous and uncomfortable. She accepted Mrs. Travers’s offer, and sat herself down on the edge of the high-backed chair nearest to the door.

‘Madame,’ she began hesitatingly, ‘I have come to you in great trouble. Madame Blair has yesterday sent me out of her house without a moment’s warning: only just time to pack my clothes and be off.’

‘Indeed, Ernestine, I am very sorry to hear it,’ said Juliet gravely; ‘you must, I fear, have committed some serious fault. Tell me, my poor girl, what it is, that I may see if I can help you.’

And then Ernestine began to cry.

‘Indeed, Madame, I have done nothing,’ she gasped out between her sobs, ‘absolument rien! Madame would not even tell me why she sent me away; she has said she would give me a good character, but she would not let me stay one day longer, and she would not tell me why I was to go: some evil persons have poisoned her mind against me, I think.’

‘This sounds very strange, Ernestine!’ said Juliet; but, from her own knowledge of Mrs. Blair’s character, it did not appear to her so very unlikely that some sudden caprice might have set her stepmother against her former favourite.

‘She has given me but my month’s wages, and not one sou more, after all these years that I have so faithfully served her!’ sobbed Ernestine.

‘My poor girl, I am very sorry for you,’ said Juliet compassionately. She had never much liked Ernestine, but she had liked Mrs. Blair still less, and she could readily believe in her injustice and harshness to an old servant. ‘Don’t cry, Ernestine; I will do all I can to help you to get another place.’

‘How good you are, Madame! but, alas! I must not stay here, for troubles never come alone, and the very day I left—yesterday, it was—I heard from ma pauvre mère—ma pauvre mère!’ she added, sobbing bitterly. Ernestine’s mother had been dead ten years. ‘She is very old, cette chère mère, and she writes to me to say that she can no longer do her work, and the officiers de police have come and seized all her furniture—and she has not even a bed—think of that, Madame Travers, not a bed! and she past seventy!’

‘Dear, dear! Ernestine; this is very sad,’ said Juliet, much distressed. ‘What can you do?’

‘I must go to Paris at once, Madame, and I have only just enough for my journey, not one sou to relieve my aged parent when I get there!’

‘My poor girl, of course I will lend you—give you, I mean—anything you want!’ cried Juliet, rising and reaching out her hand to take her purse off the writing-table, for she seldom stopped to inquire into a case of need. Juliet was generous and open-handed to a fault.

‘Stay, Madame!’ cried Ernestine, rising with the air of a tragedy queen, and stretching out her hand to ward back the proffered charity. ‘Never shall it be said that Ernestine Guillot came to any member of the family she had served so long—to beg! No, Madame, I will have no gift from you; I ask but for a fair price, Madame; I have something to sell!’

‘To sell? Well, if you are too proud to borrow, Ernestine,’ said

Mrs. Travers with a smile, 'I will do what I can to *buy* from you. Is it some trinket that you have?'

'No, Madame, it is no bijou;' and, after much mysterious fumbling among the folds of her dress, Ernestine proceeded to draw forth from her pocket a small flat parcel in silver paper.

Mrs. Travers stretched out her hand for it, but Ernestine did not give it to her. 'Non pas, Madame!' she said; 'I first must know what you will give for him?'

'How can I say unless I know what it is? Name your own price; what do you think it worth?'

'Would Madame give me fifty pounds?' inquired Ernestine, not without hesitation.

'Fifty pounds! Why, what can it be to be worth so much?' said Juliet, considerably taken aback.

'It is a letter, Madame.'

'Fifty pounds for a letter!' cried Juliet, in amazement. 'My good girl, you must be mad! Who would give fifty pounds for a letter?'

'I think that you will, Madame,' answered Ernestine calmly. Something in her voice and manner struck Juliet as singularly strange. Her face was bent, looking down at the packet in her hands, which she slowly and with a good deal of ostentation unwrapped from the two or three papers in which it was folded.

'This letter, Madame—or rather, this part of a letter, for it is but the half that is left—was written more than five years ago—for the date is still here—to you.'

'To me?'

'Yes, Madame, to you. Madame Blair did steal it and tear it up; and yesterday as I was turning out all my old boxes to pack up my things, I did find this half left in the lining of an old dress she did give me three years ago, and which was so worn and *enchiffons* that I had never even picked it to pieces—it was not worth anything but rags—and there I did find your letter, Madame.'

'Let me see the handwriting,' said Juliet in a faint voice, making a step towards her—whilst the room seemed to swim in front of her eyes.

Ernestine held up the fragment of the letter firmly in both her hands.

'Fifty pounds, Madame, and it is yours!'

One glance, and Mrs. Travers turned rapidly away to her writing-table, unlocked the drawer, pulled out her cheque-book, and hurriedly filled in the fifty pounds to Ernestine Guillot or Order.

'Here is the money,' she said sternly. 'I do not believe your

story about your mother—but take this cheque, give me my letter, and go back to your own country, and never let me see your face again.’

Bowing her head with a murmured remonstrance, Ernestine passed out of the room, as she passes out of this story, and Juliet saw her no more. And Juliet Travers stood motionless in the middle of the room, grasping the torn yellow fragment of her past life in her hand.

Before her dazed eyes, upon the faded page, the words of love and devotion, seen now for the first time, trembled all blotted and blurred through her tears; dear words of tender entreaty, of passionate love, of undying devotion; words that she had waited and pined for so long in vain, with such mad hopeless longing, and that had lain so long unanswered and unheeded.

With a bitter cry Juliet flung up her arms.

‘Too late! My God, it comes too late!’ she cried, and then fell forward across the table with the letter clasped against her heart in a passion of despairing tears.

The footman once more opened the door and announced—

‘Colonel Fleming.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

COLONEL FLEMING, thus suddenly ushered into the room, made one step forward, and then stopped short in some confusion.

‘My dear Mrs. Travers, you are in trouble—what is the matter? can I help you? or rather I had better leave you—I have come at an inopportune moment.’

Juliet was standing with her face turned away from him, stifling down those bitter sobs which his entrance had interrupted. For a moment, prudence and wisdom counselled her to say, ‘Yes, leave me, I am not well,’ and to let him go. But for one moment, and then the old impetuous nature rose within her, the nature that was weak and uncalculating in its possibly unwise impulses, yet ever true and honest to itself.

She turned quickly towards him, and placed the faded yellow letter in his hands.

‘Not inopportune, Colonel Fleming,’ she said, in a low, trembling voice, as she looked up at him with eyes all heavy with unshed tears; ‘you never came at a more appropriate moment—look at that!’

Hugh Fleming looked down at the torn paper she had thrust into his hand, and turned it over wonderingly.

‘What is it?’ he said; and then with a sudden flush he recognised his own handwriting, and remembered at once what letter it was that she had given him.

He looked up at her almost angrily, and then walked away to the window, and stood with his back towards her.

What did she mean by showing him this old, disregarded, disdained love-letter, of which for years she had never given the faintest sign or acknowledgment? was it to mock at his love and to insult him?

But no! what then meant her tears and her agitation? and why was the letter all torn and mutilated?

‘What does it mean?’ he asked, coming back close to her as she stood with drooping head, supporting herself with both hands against the edge of the table.

‘It means—’ she said, looking up at him, whilst a bright flush covered her face—‘it means, that for years I have misunderstood you and done you injustice, that I thought you had scorned and forsaken me—it means that I have found out my mistake—it means—— O God, Hugh! it means that my heart is broken!’

With a cry she sank down again as he had first found her, with her arms stretched out before her and her head bowed upon them, whilst convulsive sobs shook her whole frame.

Scarcely as yet understanding her meaning, but filled nevertheless with a great yearning pity for her sorrow, Hugh Fleming stood by her side softly stroking the small dusky head as it lay bowed down in bitter grief before him.

‘My poor child!’ he said gently, whilst his compassionate hands strayed tenderly as a woman’s over her soft dark hair, and by degrees the soothing touch quieted and calmed her.

‘Now tell me, Juliet,’ he said at length, when her sobs had ceased, and he had with gentle force raised her and placed her in an arm-chair; ‘tell me now, for I hardly understand what you mean, and why the sight of that old forgotten letter should have upset you so strangely.’

‘Oh, don’t you understand,’ she said, wringing her hands together, ‘don’t you see that I never received it—never saw it until to-day?’

Colonel Fleming started.

‘Never saw it before!’ he repeated in amazement. ‘What do you mean! can you mean that you never received it?’

‘Never!’

‘That you thought I had left England for years without a line or a word—that I had deserted you in such a heartless way, Juliet! did you think that of me?’ he asked in great agitation.



'BOWED DOWN IN BITTER GRIEF.'

Juliet nodded sadly.

'I did think all that of you,' she answered sorrowfully. 'I lost my belief in you and in all mankind.'

'But I cannot understand it,' he said, passing his hand in a bewildered way over his forehead; 'it seems impossible. Why, I wrote it quite a week before I left England; and, yes—I remember perfectly that I posted it myself—and, of course I could not have addressed it wrongly—it seems impossible that it could have gone wrong! and besides, if so, how did it come into your possession now? by what chance have you suddenly found it again?'

'It was brought to me not ten minutes ago by Ernestine—you don't remember Ernestine? she was my stepmother's French maid. It seems that Mrs. Blair has sent her away very suddenly for some cause or other; and partly, I suspect, from revenge, partly to extract money from me, she brought me this letter.'

'But how on earth did she get it?'

'Her story is that she has only just found it slipped down between the linings of an old dress which Mrs. Blair gave her about that time, and which she had never unpicked nor made any use of; but that in turning out all her things, in order to pack them to go away, this old fragment of a letter fell out. She says—what must be true—that Mrs. Blair stole it out of the post-bag and destroyed it.'

'Good God! what could induce the woman to commit such an iniquity!' exclaimed Hugh, pacing excitedly up and down the room. 'What cause, what possible reason, could she have for such a wicked action?'

'It seems indeed hardly conceivable that any one could do such a thing,' answered Juliet; 'and yet I suppose that there is very little a spiteful wicked woman will not do to injure another.'

'But was she indeed so wicked and spiteful?' asked Hugh, as he came back and sat down beside her. 'Are you indeed sure that it was Mrs. Blair who did this thing? it hardly seems consistent with her character. I remember she used often to speak of you to me with great affection; and although she always seemed to be a very silly and conceited woman, yet I should have thought her a perfectly harmless one. Indeed, Juliet, I used often to think that you were hard on her.'

'Did you?' said Juliet in astonishment; 'did you really? In what way could you have thought me hard on her?'

'I never thought that you made sufficient allowance for her very frivolous and childish nature.'

'Ah, you did not know her as well as I did!' said Juliet, with a short bitter laugh. 'All that silly gushing childishness was put

on. Mrs. Blair is by no means a fool; she is as cunning and designing a woman as I have ever met in my life, and perfectly dishonest and unscrupulous. Years ago I remember how she used to work and work with that soft playful manner, and yet with untiring perseverance, at anything she wanted to get out of my poor father. Young as I was, I could see perfectly through all her lies and her artifices. I believe she moved heaven and earth to get my father to make a will that would give her a life interest in Sotherne, curtail my rights, and place me under her guardianship and control. But my father was too wise for that; and when she found how things had been left, she hated me. Outwardly she was all sweetness and affection, because it suited her interests to be so; but in reality she hated me bitterly because I was rich and she was poor, because Sotherne was mine and she only a guest in it at my pleasure.'

'But still,' argued Colonel Fleming, 'why should she have stopped my letter? it seems such a senseless, meaningless piece of spite.'

'She stopped your letter because—because—' said Juliet hesitatingly, and a deep flush covered her face as she nevertheless ended her sentence bravely—'because she knew that had I received it I should have married you.'

Hugh Fleming shaded his face with his hand and was silent.

'She had found out that much about me,' continued Juliet after a short silence; 'she was sharp enough for that; and you know I was never very clever at hiding my feelings,' she added with a little sad smile that was unspeakably touching.

Still Colonel Fleming did not speak, and Juliet went on, after a pause—

'Had things turned out so, it is certain that Sotherne and not London would have been my permanent home—and in that case Mrs. Blair would certainly not have continued to live there. I could never have tolerated her presence—she would have been forced to seek another home; and Sotherne is a comfortable house, and she gets it rent-free. It would not at all have suited her to leave it. She did not want to leave it. What she wanted is exactly what has happened. I see perfectly through all her devices now: she wanted me to marry a man who had no country tastes, whose society was not a sufficient resource to me to enable me to endure it in the retirement of a country home, and as whose wife I should probably prefer the excitement and variety of a London life. Everything,' added Juliet very bitterly, 'everything has turned out perfectly to her satisfaction: she first intercepted and tore up your letter—she then urged a

marriage with Cis upon me in every possible way ; other circumstances—poor little Georgie's death and my own utter recklessness and misery—played most conveniently into her hands. Mrs. Blair has remained in undisturbed possession of Sotherne Court, and I—have made shipwreck of my life !'

Juliet ceased speaking, and bowed her head down upon her hands ; whilst Hugh Fleming hastily left her side, and, walking away to the window, stood for some minutes with his back turned to her.

When he turned again and spoke to her, his voice was hoarse and trembling.

'Tell me one thing,' he said. 'You have said that your faith in me was broken ; is that faith now restored, Juliet ? will you trust me again now ?'

'Trust you !' she exclaimed, rising quickly and stretching out both her hands towards him. 'Trust you ! How can you ask it ! Yes, through life unto death !'

'God bless you for that !' he answered. For one moment he bent over the hands he held within his, and pressed them passionately to his lips—then suddenly dropped them hastily, and without another word turned away and left her alone.

As the front door closed behind Hugh Fleming, the luncheon bell rang. Juliet hastily roused herself, brushed away the traces of her emotion, and went downstairs.

It is all the same—if our hearts are breaking, if we have lost our money or our happiness, if our eldest son has been rusticated, or our daughter has run away with the doctor's assistant—all the same we must go down to our meals at their stated hours, sit unmoved and impassive through the ordained number of courses, talk of the weather, or of any trivial subject we can think of, with a calm and smiling face ; and all that we may conceal our wounds from the servants who wait upon us, and who would certainly, if we departed from the ordinary routine of our lives, begin to wonder and chatter over what ailed us.

Juliet Travers would have given a great deal to have escaped the tedious luncheon hour, with the two solemn men-servants in attendance—but it was impossible. She went down and found Cis already at table. For a wonder, no one had 'dropped in,' and the husband and wife were alone.

'Not a thing fit to eat !' Cis said irritably as his wife came in, and not looking up at her. 'You know I can't bear all these brown sauces—they always disagree with me ; and this is the third day running you have had roast chickens for luncheon. I really wish, Juliet, you would see to things a little better.'

‘I am very sorry, Cis,’ said Juliet rather absently, sitting down and helping herself mechanically to the first thing that was handed to her.

Her husband sat opposite to her, looking the picture of misery. Like most people of delicate health and indolent habits, he was extremely fastidious and dainty in the matter of food.

When they were first married, Juliet had taken some pains to study his tastes and fancies in this respect; but when she found that, do what she would, Cis always grumbled equally, she gave up the effort to satisfy him as a hopeless task.

The cooking was always either too plain or too rich to suit him: this was too strong-flavoured, that had not flavour enough; and it generally ended in his pushing away his food untasted, and leaving the table in a fit of bad temper that was absolutely childish.

Juliet had no sympathy whatever for these daily complaints. She only felt pity, and almost contempt, for a man who could make a misery out of such trifles.

‘What’s this?’ said Cis, standing up and poking his fork into a game-pie. ‘All messed up with aspic jelly! Can’t one get a good honest piece of roast meat in the house?’

‘There is some cold beef on the sideboard,’ said Juliet, with a not very lively interest in her voice.

‘Yes, I dare say! as tough as leather! I wish you would change the butcher; we get worse meat than anybody else in London.’

‘Who’s that went out just now?’ asked Cis presently, as Juliet did not answer him.

‘It was Colonel Fleming,’ she answered shortly.

‘Then why couldn’t you have asked him to lunch?’

‘It is a good thing I did not, as you say everything is so nasty,’ she said with a laugh. ‘But Colonel Fleming would have stayed, I suppose, if he had wished to do so; I did not think it necessary to ask him.’

‘No, you can have that horrid Mrs. Dalmaine and all your stuck-up lords and swells here every day, but you can’t be civil to an old friend like Fleming!’ said Cis tauntingly.

Juliet bit her lip and was silent.

‘I am going down to Sotherne to-morrow,’ she said presently; ‘we have no dinner engagement to-morrow, and I am thinking of running down for the day.’

Now it so happened that Cis was under promise to take Gretchen Rudenbach down to the Crystal Palace for an afternoon concert, and he had been wondering much how he should manage to escape unnoticed from home for the best part of the day.

Cis was at heart terribly afraid of his wife. His friendship with Gretchen was, in truth, of the most innocent character, and if from the first he had made no secret of it with his wife, she would probably have been only too glad that he should find amusement any where, to object in the very least to it. But he had liked to keep up the little halo of romance with which his intercourse with Gretchen had from the first been surrounded. Cis Travers thought of no actual evil with regard to Gretchen Rudenbach, and yet he would have liked to be suspected of it; and it flattered his vanity to compromise her by taking her about with him rather publicly.

More than once lately he had been noticed at Richmond and at Maidenhead on a hot afternoon, with the blue-eyed music-player, when his wife was driving in the Park, or entertaining her friends at afternoon strawberries and tea—perfectly unconscious of her husband's occupations.

And it so happened that Cis had on these expeditions with Gretchen in contemplation for the morrow, and had moreover been wondering what excuse he could frame for dining as well as spending the afternoon at the Crystal Palace. So that, when Juliet announced her intention of going down to Sotherne, his face cleared at once, and he answered with alacrity:

‘Well, I think you had better; you have not been down to Sotherne for some time, and you ought to run down occasionally. You won’t want me, I suppose?’

‘Oh dear no, thank you! I am only going to see Mrs. Blair, and to look how Andrews has planted the garden out this summer. And perhaps I shall go on to Broadley and bring Flora back with me, if she can get ready in time.’

‘Very well, then; as you say we have no dinner engagement, I think I will dine out, and then you need not hurry back before the evening train; it will be cooler for you to come back by, this hot weather; and if you are home by half-past nine, it will, I suppose, be in plenty of time for your evening engagements: if I am lining out, it will leave you free.’

‘Thank you, Cis,’ said Juliet, slightly surprised, for her husband did not often study her convenience and comfort. ‘It will be pleasanter, certainly, to come up by the later train, and will give me more time there. Oh, yes, I shall be in plenty of time; I have only Lady Withers’s ball, and need not go to that till eleven—and if I am tired, I shall very likely not go to it at all.’

And so it was settled.

Cis went his way up to Notting Hill after lunch, to settle with Gretchen about calling for her the next day, and to ask her to dine with him at the Crystal Palace after the concert; whilst Juliet

went about her daily round of visits and shopping. But driving along at a foot-pace under the trees in the Park, listening wearily the while to Mrs. Dalmaine's chatter, she felt, notwithstanding, that the world was a little better and brighter and happier to her for that torn yellow letter that was folded upon her heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

SMOTHERED in dust, and creaking dismally like a creature in agonies, the twelve o'clock train was steaming into the station at Sotherne.

The very sight made one hot—so covered with fine white dust and so begrimed with dirt and heat was every carriage and every passenger.

Simmonds, the porter, had sauntered leisurely forwards. No one now ever got out at Sotherne, and, apparently, no one ever got in—no one, at least, of any significance. Only a fat farmer from a second-class carriage, and two rough-looking drovers from a third, got out; whilst one girl with a bundle in a blue-checked handker—was waiting to get in.

To-day, however, there was a little variety, for a lady got out of one of the dusty, hot-cushioned first-class carriages.

At the sight of her Simmonds, who had been bestowing considerable attention upon the blue-bundled young lady, suddenly and mercilessly left that damsel to find a seat for herself, and hurried forward, touching his cap obsequiously.

'I don't think the carriage has come yet, ma'am,' he said, taking Mrs. Travers's hand-bag and shawl from her, and shading his eyes with his hand as he looked down the white highroad.

'I don't expect the carriage,' answered Mrs. Travers. 'Is your wife quite well, and the baby?'

'Quite well, thank you, ma'am. You will find it very hot walking, ma'am,' added the man respectfully. 'Should I send a boy up to the house to say you've come, ma'am? He wouldn't be gone long, if you would not mind sitting in the waiting-room.'

'No, thank you, Simmonds; I had rather walk. I shall go slowly, and I dare say I shall not find it very hot.'

Nevertheless Juliet did find it very hot indeed.

It was one of those perfectly breezeless, cloudless days, when the whole air seems hazy and swimming with the heat. By the time he had walked along the quarter of a mile of dusty highroad, she began to regret that she had not allowed Simmonds to send up the boy for the carriage. But the worst part of the walk was over.

Presently, by a path well known to her she turned into a waving

cornfield, cutting off the corner of which she came to a small wicket gate which led into her own park. Here at once was shade and peace and loveliness.

Juliet was in no hurry; she sat down under the first tree she came to and took off her hat.

Before her lay the cornfield through which she had passed, already in full ear, flecked all over with blue and purple cornflowers and great scarlet poppies, above which a thousand white and yellow butterflies fluttered ceaselessly; behind her were the great woods that were her own; from their deep shades she could hear the soft cooing of the wood-pigeons, the occasional crackle of the branches as some squirrel scampered along them, and the soft everlasting ripple of the leaves. A little stream babbled fresh and cool at her feet, fringed by drooping ferns and tall meadow-sweet and star-like wild-parsley flowers. Behind her, from the green slope hard by, came the steady munch of big-eyed dark-skinned Alderney cows standing knee-deep in the luscious grass; and right above her head, up in the deep blue sky, was one fluttering lark singing away with all his might and main.

Sweet sounds and sights and smells! How delicious, how wonderful, after months of brick and mortar, of the stone pavements and the stunted shrubs of London squares! How intoxicating to find oneself suddenly transported into a scene like this! What a feast for the tired eyes is all the luxuriant greenery of midsummer! What peace to the wearied ears and head are the hundred hushing sounds of a summer's day!

Who is there that understands the country with the deep joy, the intensity of appreciation, the delight too rapturous for words, of the imprisoned Londoner set free for one blessed day from the unloveliness of his daily surroundings!

It is worth while to live nine months of the year in a city for the sake of the keen delight of the other three: a delight which I believe no country-nurtured person, however fond he may be of country life and country pursuits, ever understands and realises with the same intensity.

Juliet had all the vivid imagination, the deep poetry of soul, which is above all needful to constitute a true lover of nature. It was not merely to her a fine day and a pleasant prospect; there was a whole world to her in the fair sights and sounds around her. There was a meaning in the deep shadows under the trees and the yellow glare of the sunlight beyond, a rhythm in every babble of the brook, a poem in every waving flower on its banks; it was like an essay on life to her to sit and look upon it all, like a lesson in all that is best and purest and loveliest. Sweet teachings of

nature! how is it that to some you are but a blank meaningless page, whilst others can read all the wisdom of your hidden story as in an open book?

Tired with the heat of her journey, and soothed by the murmuring sounds around her, Juliet leant her head back against the lime-tree under which she sat, and gradually fell asleep. A little breeze from beneath the drooping woods caught the soft rings of her dark hair; low-voiced insects hummed and buzzed about her; flakes of scented blossom fluttered down from the lime-tree above, and the brook gurgling on beside her blended vaguely with the music of her dreams.

Such a sweet picture she looked, sitting there in her cool blue muslin dress, with her head thrown a little back, her lips a little parted, and her hands clasped loosely together in front of her! She looked very young—hardly more than a girl; and yet there were many sad drooping lines on the clear pale face, that would never perhaps look free from care and suffering again.

By-and-by, a cloud stole for an instant over the face of the sun, and with it the breeze freshened. With a start and a little shiver, Juliet awoke and sprang to her feet. ‘I did not come down here to go to sleep!’ she said aloud to herself as she looked at her watch and found that she had wasted nearly half an hour. Skirting the shady border of the wood, she began slowly to climb the side of the hill, and presently the many-twisted chimneys and the three red gables of Sotherne Court appeared before her. Leaving the park, she turned into the gardens through the shrubbery gate. No one seemed to be moving around the house or gardens. It was about the men’s dinner-time, and the roller was standing on the lawn and the wheelbarrow on the gravel walk just as Andrews and his assistant had left them to go off to their midday meal.

The windows stood wide open, and soft muslin draperies fluttered out from the morning-room. Mrs. Blair had adopted as her own the little morning-room that used in the old days to be Juliet’s special retreat. It was here that she was sitting on this particular morning. A white muslin dress plentifully adorned with pink ribbons decked the somewhat angular lines of her spare figure, and a mob-cap of muslin and lace to match invested her with a combined elegance and simplicity suitable to the novel character of a betrothed damsel in which she was now figuring.

She sat on the sofa, whilst in front of her on a low stool squatted the happy lover, obediently holding a skein of white wool, which his lady-love was deftly winding off his outstretched red hands.

‘Now, Daniel!’ said the lady playfully, ‘how can I wind if you fidget so? do keep still!’

‘My charming love, who could keep still at the feet of so much beauty!’ returned the lover gallantly; ‘when the heart is on fire, the—ahem, the—a—tenement of clay is naturally restless!’

Mr. Lamplough was secretly ardently desiring to get up, as the position into which Mrs. Blair had sportively pushed him was beginning to be sadly trying to his back and knees.

‘You naughty darling!’ she answered, laughing affectedly and shaking her finger at him; ‘always flattering your poor Maria! When we are married, Daniel, I am afraid you will no longer make me such pretty speeches!’

The Reverend Daniel promptly reflected that, when he was married, he was not likely to waste much time squatting on the floor like a journeyman tailor at his Maria’s feet; but courtship, as he was well aware, brings its own appointed duties.

‘Cruel, cruel angel!’ he exclaimed tragically; ‘already you begin to doubt my devotion!’

‘Never, my dearest love—do not suspect your own Maria! it is my exquisite sensitiveness that leads me for one moment astray. Doubt you, my love!—you that are the kindred soul so long sought for in vain by this widowed, lonely heart!’

And here Mrs. Blair, dropping the ball of wool, melted into gentle tearless sobs behind her lace handkerchief; upon which Mr. Lamplough joyfully seized the opportunity of releasing his cramped legs from their aching posture, and rising from the ground with difficulty, by holding on to the corner of the table, he landed himself safely upon the sofa by his Maria’s side, where he proceeded to clasp her somewhat shrinking form to the rumpled and not altogether spotless shirt-front which veiled his manly bosom.

It was at this critical moment in the proceedings of these fond lovers that an intruding shadow suddenly darkened the window.

With a little scream, Mrs. Blair pushed back her lover.

‘We are watched, Daniel!’ she cried; ‘for Heaven’s sake, leave me!’

The Reverend Daniel had also caught sight of the interloping somebody outside, and was not slow to take the hint. It was all very well to act the adoring lover in strict privacy with this charming widow, but he had no fancy for making himself ridiculous before a third person. With a sudden bound, he sprang to the door; and when Juliet Travers, pushing aside the muslin curtains, stepped in through the long French window, she just caught sight of a pair of black legs flying precipitately through the door.

It did not strike her that she had come in at an inopportune moment. It could not have been Higgs, of course, who had bolted in so undignified a manner; and it only vaguely crossed her mind that

Mrs. Blair's visitor, whoever he might be, had an unpleasantly rough manner of slamming the door behind him.

Mrs. Blair, at the sudden appearance of her stepdaughter, jumped up with a little cry of genuine astonishment.

'My dearest Juliet, how you made me start! I could not think who it was. What made you come in that way? and what has brought you down to-day? and why did you not write, my darling girl? and, dear me! you must have walked from the station—and in all this heat!'

'Yes, I walked—' answered Juliet quietly, as she threw down her hat and sunshade upon the table. 'I had something to say to you, Mrs. Blair—something that could not well be written; so I thought it best to come down myself.'

'Have you, dearest Juliet? but you will have something to eat first? surely you must want something after your journey—a cup of tea or a little claret, at all events, to cool you?'

'No, thank you, Mrs. Blair,' answered Juliet, laying her hand on her stepmother's arm as she was rising to ring the bell; 'do not ring for anything—I shall have the carriage to take me on to Broadley to lunch as soon as I have said what I have to say to you. I want nothing but your attention for a few minutes.'

Something in Juliet's manner suddenly filled Mrs. Blair with a vague apprehension.

'Dear me!' she said, with a little nervous laugh; 'what can you have to say to me, Juliet? I am sure I am delighted to listen to anything you have to say; but is it so *very* important, that you cannot even rest and have some luncheon first?'

'Yes, it is very important,' answered Juliet gravely. And then for a minute she was silent, standing looking sternly down upon the woman who had wronged her so deeply and so remorselessly.

Mrs. Blair had turned a little pale under her rouge, and her heart was thumping in a manner very unusual to her. She could not meet her stepdaughter's eye, but sat fidgeting nervously with the pink ribbon bows on the front of her dress.

'I have seen Ernestine,' began Juliet. A sudden sense of relief sent the blood back into Mrs. Blair's face.

'Oh, my dear Juliet,' she said with alacrity, 'I know that you have come to plead with me about that poor misguided girl! I see she has been to you with some tale about my cruelty and harshness in sending her away so suddenly; it is just like your goodness and charity of heart to take her part and to come down to plead for her—and of course it *does* sound rather severe, I admit, after so many years, to send her off at a day's notice; but if you heard all the rights of it, and *my* version of the story, I think you

would agree with me that I have done perfectly right in sending her away—such a flighty, untrustworthy wretch as she has turned out, and has been giving herself such airs—impertinence to my visitors, and Heaven knows what besides!’

‘You are mistaken,’ answered Juliet quietly; ‘it is not about your dismissal of your maid that I came to speak. Whatever I may or may not think of your sending her away so suddenly, you had a perfect right to do so, and I should not dream of interfering with or questioning your arrangements. No, Mrs. Blair, it is not of your maid’s dismissal, but of something which she told me that I have to speak to you.’

Again the colour fled from Mrs. Blair’s cheeks.

‘Something she told you!’ she repeated blankly.

‘There was a letter,’ said Juliet, ‘a letter which should have been received by me five years ago—that letter is now, or was until yesterday, in Ernestine’s possession. Mrs. Blair, I have come to ask you why that letter never reached me?’

‘A letter?—I cannot think what you mean! What have I to do with Ernestine’s letters? what on earth do you suppose that I am likely to know about it?’ faltered Mrs. Blair, whilst there flashed rapidly through her mind the recollection of all that had happened on the morning of the arrival of that letter which she had destroyed.

As distinctly as if it had been yesterday she remembered tearing it in half upon her maid’s sudden entrance, and then throwing it into the fire. No, there could not be a doubt of its destruction—she remembered well how the bright flames had danced up and licked up the white paper in a second, and how the charred and blackened fragments had fluttered with the smoke up into the chimney. It was as plain before her eyes as if she could see it now. The letter had most assuredly been utterly destroyed. Ernestine might have guessed at the story and raked it up out of revenge, but she could have no possible proof—and who would believe the word of a discarded servant against that of her mistress? She might (putting together the fact of her fetching the bag and seeing the blazing letter) have got hold of the truth, but it was quite impossible that she could bring forward any evidence to support her accusation; therefore Mrs. Blair rapidly decided that her best and safest plan was to brazen it out and to deny it utterly.

‘I really cannot think what you are talking about, Juliet,’ she said, in well-feigned bewilderment. ‘You look at me in such a strange manner—you seem almost to be accusing me of something!’ she added, with a nervous laugh.

‘I do accuse you of something; I accuse you of intercepting and

destroying a letter addressed to me by Colonel Fleming just before he went away to India!’

‘Juliet, you positively insult me! what can you mean? *I* intercept a letter, indeed! *I* interfere with another person’s correspondence! What on earth do you take me for? *I* never was so insulted in my life!’ and Mrs. Blair’s voice actually quivered with the force of her righteous indignation.

‘Then, how do you account for this?’ said Juliet, unfastening her pocket-book and holding out to her the torn letter which Ernestine had brought her. ‘This, Mrs. Blair, your maid found in the lining of a dress which you had given her!’

Mrs. Blair stared blankly and speechlessly at the fragment in Juliet’s hand; she recognised the letter immediately, but the sight of it filled her with utter amazement. How on earth did Ernestine get hold of it? for of course she knew at once that the dress story was a fabrication.

‘I know nothing of it,’ she faltered at last; ‘I never saw it before: it must have been Ernestine’s doing entirely.’

‘What motive could Ernestine have had?’ exclaimed Juliet impatiently. ‘Mrs. Blair, do not take the trouble to deny what is as plain as daylight. You knew that I expected a letter from Colonel Fleming, for I had told you that he was going to write to me. You watched for it and intercepted it; how it came into your maid’s possession I neither know nor care; but I do know that you—and you alone—stole my letter.’

Then Mrs. Blair, driven from her last entrenchment, burst into tears. ‘I did it for the best, Juliet—indeed, indeed I did. *I* was so afraid you would be led into making an imprudent match. I only wished for your happiness.’

‘*My* happiness!’ repeated her stepdaughter scornfully. ‘You did not think much of my happiness, I fancy. All you wanted was your own selfish ends and your own cruel revenge on a girl whom you always hated and envied.’

‘Dearest Juliet, do not speak so! Pray believe me—I meant it for the best, I did indeed!’ and Mrs. Blair sobbed and wrung her hands, and looked the picture of woe.

‘And do you know what your “best” has done for me?’ answered Juliet in a low concentrated voice; ‘do you know that you have ruined my happiness and embittered my soul? do you know that you have spoilt two lives, his and mine? Remember that, if evil were to come of it, it would be your fault—lie at your door; and bitterest curses would fall upon your head.’

‘Juliet, Juliet, spare me!’ cried the unhappy Mrs. Blair, covering her ears with both her hands.

‘What had I done—’ continued Juliet bitterly and wildly; ‘good heavens! what had I done to you, that you should have punished me so cruelly? What in the whole course of my life had I been guilty of to deserve such a terrible retaliation? Had you not lived under my roof, been fed at my expense, been treated in my house with all due honour and respect as my father’s widow? Are you not human, have you no womanly pity, that you were not able to stop short of breaking my heart! How could you do it! Good God! woman, how could you do it!’

She flung up her hands in a paroxysm of despair, whilst tears hot and bitter welled up suddenly into her eyes.

At the sight of her stepdaughter’s emotion Mrs. Blair recovered her presence of mind.

For one moment, in her utter discomfiture, she had sobbed and prayed and owned herself to be guilty: but she soon began shrewdly to perceive that it would never answer for her to be too humble or too penitent.

The worst was over. Juliet, it is true, knew of her treachery and baseness, but she was not likely to betray that knowledge to others. After all, the cards were still in her own hands, for Juliet’s secret was in her possession. She was a married woman, and she loved another man—here to her very face she had acknowledged it! what a hold such a confession gave Mrs. Blair over her stepdaughter!

Drawing herself up with a look of virtuous horror, Mrs. Blair addressed her stepdaughter in an altered voice.

‘Juliet, I am amazed at you. Whatever my faults may have been—and I confess that I am sorry now for what was simply an error of judgment, caused by over-anxiety for your happiness and welfare—whatever *mistake* I may have committed, I have at all events never lost sight of the decencies, I may say the moralities, of life. But can I believe my ears, that you, a married woman, the wife of Cecil Travers, have the audacity to confess to *me*, your father’s widow—a pure-minded, virtuous woman—to own to *me* with your own lips that you love another man who is not your husband!’

‘Silence, woman!’ cried Juliet, starting from her seat and crimsoning with anger to the very roots of her hair; ‘how dare you say such words! what is it to you whom I love or whom I don’t love?’

‘I am disgusted—simply disgusted!’ said the widow, turning away and waving her scented handkerchief before her face as if the thought of Juliet’s iniquities made her feel faint.

Juliet stifled down her anger and laughed a short bitter laugh.

‘You will probably be still more disgusted at what I have to say further to you, Mrs. Blair,’ she said scornfully. ‘You have made my house your home for several years—I do not care that you should do so any longer. As soon as it is convenient to you, I shall be much obliged if you will find another abode. I do not wish to hustle you out with unkind haste, but my house is, after your insulting words and your wicked conduct to me, no longer fitted to be your home.’

Mrs. Blair turned livid with rage. She was silent for a minute, and then, with a sudden smile of triumph, she got up and made her stepdaughter a sweeping curtsey.

‘Very much obliged to you, Mrs. Travers, I am sure. Your revenge is very nicely aimed, certainly; only, unfortunately, it has no power to wound me. I was on the point of telling you that I no longer require the kind shelter of your house, which I should in any case have left altogether in a few months—to oblige you, I will make it a few weeks. But as I am going to be married very shortly, and have a house of my own in London, I am fortunately quite independent of the charitable tender mercies of my stepdaughter.’

‘To be married!’ gasped Juliet in amazement.

‘Yes—very wonderful, of course,’ said the widow, smiling and fanning herself with great *sang-froid*. ‘Wonderful, of course, but nevertheless true. My future husband is the eminent divine the Reverend Daniel Lamplough, who has a nice house in Eccleston Street. I dare say I can hurry on my marriage to oblige you, Juliet, and turn out of Sotherne in about five or six weeks. Have you anything else to say to me?’

No, Juliet had nothing else to say. In truth, she was so much astounded at this unexpected piece of news, that she forgot all her anger in blank bewildered amazement.

She could only take her leave shortly and coldly, and depart by the way she came; whilst Mrs. Blair, triumphant to the last, laughed a scornful laugh of victory as her adversary went out.

‘I had the best of it there, I think!’ she said aloud, as soon as Juliet was out of hearing.

And there is no denying it; she *had* very much the best of it. Juliet had been out-trumped!

(To be continued.)

BELGRAVIA.

FEBRUARY 1877.

The World Well Lost.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

CHAPTER IV.

MACHELLS.

NO one who had seen Machells could have doubted the truth of that general report which gave as much poverty as pride to the good old family so fast going to the dogs—poverty of such extent as made it incumbent on the young people to marry money if they would keep anything like a footing in the county.

For many generations a Machell had been the leading man of the neighbourhood, and beyond; but now the day of small things had taken the place of the lordly years, and retribution had trodden close on the heels of folly. As so often happens, this retribution had struck the innocent, not the guilty; the children's teeth had been set on edge by the sour grapes which not they but their fathers had eaten; and Wilfrid and Arthur and Hilda had to suffer for what the Sir Gilberts and Sir Wilfrids, now mouldering in the dust, had done before them. There was no money for anything but the absolute necessities of decent living; and the contrast between the past and the present, what was and what ought to be, was in truth a tragedy of its kind.

Nothing was kept up even to the shadow of its former state; and both within and without the slow progress of decay was like a death creeping over the whole surface of things. What had once been trim, smooth-shaven lawn was now a patch of meadow grass railed off for future hay; what should have been dainty flower-beds, delicately tended, in the quaint Italian garden, were now masses of common flowering bushes and hardy cottage plants which needed no shifting, bedding out, nor housing, and were managed with such coarse care as they required by the one man and his boy who did all the out-of-door work of the place. The steps and balustrades, with the large Tuscan vases standing on them, were broken and crumbling; the fountain was choked and ruined

—the Tritons without hands and the dolphins without tails; the fishponds were stagnant tracts of slime and duckweed, whence the carp and the gold-fish had long ago disappeared; the park was let out to the neighbouring farmers for grazing-ground; all the available timber had been cut down, and none planted in its stead; more than three parts of the famous kitchen garden, where Lord Bacon was supposed to have walked and talked, had been given up to weeds; and the magnificent houses built by Sir Gilbert's father were closed because costing too much to keep up. They might have been a source of income however, had they been managed on business principles; but no Machell had yet farmed out his pines or his grapes, his early plums, his late peaches, his magnificent pears. The pride of the family, which had for its motto 'Break not bend,' had kept even step with its poverty, and money had never been raised by them save by the methods recognized as allowable among gentlemen—that is, by nothing savouring of trade. It was no disgrace to encumber the estate with mortgages till it was nearly swamped, nor to let out the park into grazing-ground. That did not come under the head of trade. Dealing with land is not trade. But to have sold peaches and grapes at Covent Garden would have been a degradation; and, if poor, the Machells had never been degraded.

The roomy stables and the paved yard where the kennels had been, the fine offices which made a small village in themselves, were becoming pitifully dilapidated for want of that little stitch in time which is as necessary with bricks and mortar as with needles and thread; but what could Sir Gilbert and my lady do with stabling for twenty horses, they who had only a basket-carriage and a cob, and whose kennels were tenanted by one old wolf-hound, sole representative of his yelping brethren? Spiders and bats, mildew and dry-rot, held the yard buildings which had once been as much part of the show as the maze and the fernery, the flower garden and Lord Bacon's walk, the vinery and stove plants, and the state apartments of the house with their Lelys and Sir Godfrey Knellers, their Vandykes and Sèvres vases. And the spiders and the bats, with their destructive surroundings, were clearly getting the best of it.

Within, things were as melancholy as without. The family lived in one wing, and that the smaller and less pretentious. Their two maids and a man represented the battalion of retainers which the former Machells had fed and housed; and the place which had feasted princes had now for its most frequent guest the traditional Duke Humphrey of the kitchen. The furniture was old and shabby, and only the most necessary

repairs were done. My lady expressed herself everywhere as delighting in the subdued tones of old material, while despising the staring crudities of new stuffs. She even extended this predilection to that hideous drawing-room chintz of theirs, where huge bunches of port-wine-coloured flowers on a sickly buff ground travestied nature and put art to shame; and she stood to her colours manfully, even when confronted with the newest theories and the latest dyes. She talked, too, learnedly and æsthetically on woman's dress and the hideous vulgarity of modern fashions; and as her plain straight-cut black gown, with the black lace kerchief round her head, like a small mantilla, became her to perfection, her style, necessitated by poverty, had its advantages, and for once want of money ensured harmony and grace.

Sir Gilbert also went in for simple living by choice. His wife's character had a certain compelling quality which had dominated his softer fibre for many years now; and the two made the best of the bad which they could not mend, and showed no blot which a censorious world could hit.

They had made an imprudent marriage in the days of their fervid youth when each had thought that life would be wrecked without the other; and that money and estate, the past and the future, the family name and the children's fortunes, might all go to the wall provided only they had love and each other. If they had found out that this was a mistake, and that young love and its rosy hours are of no vital value to the real life of man—that youthful heartbreak is better to bear than debts and impecuniosity in maturity; while the solid things of life—the education of the children, the professions of the sons, the friends, including the husbands of good degree and satisfactory settlements, to be gathered round the daughters, the county influence, political power, and social supremacy given by the wealth with which an old name is surrounded—are the things for which rational men and women do well to renounce their personal inclinations and romantic dreams,—if they had found out all this, they did not give the world the benefit of the discovery, nor even acknowledge it to each other. They kept as fair a front in this as in all else; behind the closed doors as before the face of man; and, save by their oft-repeated injunctions that their children must marry money, said no word by which it might be thought that marrying for love had been in their case a blunder.

Their children must marry money; and Lady Machell had already predetermined where. She had fixed her eyes on Guy Perceval of the Manor for Hilda, although Guy Perceval, with the Manor or without it, was by no means the man on whom Hilda

would have fixed her own eyes for herself. He was small, plain, eccentric, pragmatical; a man given to 'views,' heaven help him! and with a passion for hobbies which he rode at a hard gallop and generally to death. He was never long fixed to anything, and had already touched the surface of all the sciences, and rearranged the universe as often as he had skimmed the pages of the last popular handbook. He thought this restlessness was a profound love of truth, and ardour in the pursuit of knowledge, for which he ought to give God and his nurse thanks; he would have been nearer the mark had he called it fluidity of brain and inability to anchor or to grow. But then he had a rent-roll of fifteen thousand a year, and these were as fifteen thousand cherubim to hymn his praises, while a few insignificant accusing angels wrote down his small demerits.

If Guy Perceval was to be stalked for Hilda, Jemima Brown de Paumelle was marked down for Wilfrid. For the moment Arthur, the younger son, was left with a future undesignated; but my lady had her eye on a certain Helen Lawrence who was to be made the heiress of the family name and estates, while her two sisters would receive only younger children's portions. It would be a great match for him, for the Lawrences were pleasant as well as rich; but he was so handsome—so winning and charming in every way—that his mother thought the thing would not be difficult when the times were ripe. As yet they were not ripe, Helen being only fifteen and Arthur just twenty-four; which narrowed my lady's cares to the task of prevention only, keeping off undesirables until she could advocate the claims of fitness.

As for Wilfrid, he had but to walk over the course whenever he chose to lift the stakes—stakes manifestly laid in his way by a beneficent Providence, as my lady honestly believed; for she had a firm conviction that Providence gives itself a great deal of trouble about people of old name and good condition, and takes care to send them dock-leaves when they have stung themselves with nettles, and to provide rafts when they have deliberately flung themselves from safe places into deep waters. Jemima Brown de Paumelle was to be Wilfrid's dock-leaf. There was no doubt about it. When he could or would make up his mind to ask her to be his shrinking and reluctant wife, the fatted calf would be slain at Paumelle House in a jubilant assent, and everything would be arranged without a hitch between the parents. For the principals in this act of barter something else might be said.

With her keen perception of chances sharpened to the utmost by her needs, and of the price to be paid for certain social goods, Lady Machell had called on the Brown de Paumelles so soon as they

had finished and furnished their big barrack-like house with its forty bedrooms and acres of glass, and had fairly established themselves in the country with their appalling magnificence overflowing at all four corners. It was she who had opened for them the huis clos of the county families, who had been their steadfast friend and indefatigable chaperon. She helped poor timid little Mrs. Brown with words of advice as to her dinners and delicate suggestions as to her dress; she shored up her feebleness in public and enlightened her ignorance in private, while she did her best to manipulate the coarse-grained husband into tolerable shape, and to make the daughter less of a scarecrow than nature and a defective taste in millinery had hitherto made her. The Brown de Pauvelles worshipped my lady, who was big and handsome, and, though proud and scheming, both kindly and gracious when things were not going wrong and men and circumstances ranged as she marshalled. Flying at higher game as she did, she never frittered away her influence on minor matters; so that the soap-boiler himself, made wary by success, was forced to confess that her friendship for them must be genuine and not for what she could get out of them, seeing that she got nothing and that the loan which, in the beginning, he had prophesied Sir Gilbert would ask for before the month was out, seemed no nearer now after three years of close friendship (?) than it was at the first.

The hand of his pinched and overweighted little daughter was a price which the wealthy parvenu was willingly prepared to pay for a life-long alliance with one of the oldest families in the county, even if under a temporary pecuniary eclipse. He loved his daughter truly, who, with her mother, would have been so much happier had they never emerged from their modest eight-roomed villa at Clapton, never driven in anything more aristocratic than a four-wheeled cab, nor known a more costly dissipation than the upper boxes at the theatre, and a fortnight at Margate in August; and he thought that he was doing the best for her ultimate welfare in giving her to a powerful, fastidious, masterful man like Wilfrid Machell, with a known bad temper, a will hammered out of iron, and a place in the county which only those born and bred to the manner could rightly fill. In the same way Sir Gilbert and my lady thought that they were doing the best by their son when they pressed on him as his wife a pale, limp, colourless little girl whose riches were to her so much slavery, and whose title, when it came, would oppress her like a crime and make her ashamed of her unfitness before the very kitchenmaid and footboy—pressing on him as his wife a woman whom he could never love, and who would never love him; who would exasperate him by her timidity, by her

want of breeding, by her ignorance of his shibboleth all through; who would strengthen his natural spirit of domination until it became well-bred brutality by her invertebrate acquiescence, her abject submission; between whom and him would not be a thought in common; and who, if they lived together to the end of time, would never be friends nor even intimate acquaintances. And all this ruin of two lives because the soap-boiler counted his hundreds by thousands, and Machells wanted a few loads of bricks, while that hideous old chintz, with its bunches of port-wine-coloured flowers on a pale buff ground was considerably the worse for wear.

But Wilfrid still hung fire. He knew that it had to be done; but, strong and resolute of will as he was, he staved off the evil day year by year, and could not bring his mind to it. He always said to himself that he would wait till he was thirty, and then he would. He was thirty now—just eleven years older than Muriel and six than Arthur; but he had not said those decisive words which Mr. Brown de Paumelle, as well as Sir Gilbert and Lady Machell, were so anxious to ratify. Old Brown, a little incited thereto by my lady's delicately veiled conjectures, thought that perhaps something would come out of the ball to be given on Jemima's coming of age. Partly for this reason, he resolved that it should be the most splendid affair of its kind that had ever been seen in the neighbourhood; Lady Machell promising for her own set in the county; hoping to make 'Captain Wilfrid' see so clearly the difference between Paumelle House and Machells, and what money could do for his family, that he would no longer hesitate to patch his stately rags with modern golden shoddy, albeit a little dirty in the earlier strands.

And Wilfrid, too, put this terrible ball before him as the spring-board whence he must take that leap by which he would restore the fortunes of his house and lose his personal happiness and private self-respect for ever. Yet, after all, what did it signify? he used to think, with that cynical disbelief in the higher things of life which runs through the stronger lines of modern thought. A few years more or less, and one thing is exactly like another. You marry with love and you grow into coldness; or you marry with coldness and you grow into tolerance—where is the difference? But money remains a fixed quantity; and a good cook is a great fact.

If only there had been no such person as Muriel Smith, the thing would have been done two years ago. But when a man has living within an easy walk of him the woman who, of all others, is his ideal of what a woman ought to be, it makes his marriage with one totally uninteresting and unsympathetic a difficult matter, and excuses the delay which, seeing that the thing must

needs be, and that it is the dock-leaf sent by Providence for nettles, is, to say the least of it, weak. Still, it had to be done; and Muriel notwithstanding, it should be done; and the ball on Jémima's coming of age would be the occasion when. But because he was sore and ill at ease with himself and life all round, because he was decidedly ill-tempered and, when he was in pain, not disinclined to pass it on, Wilfrid had as yet said nothing to either Sir Gilbert or Lady Machell of his intention to restore their peace of mind by his own matrimonial suicide. He meant to make them happy and gather his dock-leaf as was expected of him; but he would not give them the satisfaction of knowing his decision until the humour took him to announce his immolation. And up to this hour the humour had not taken him.

Sharp enough while it had lasted, that illness of which Wilfrid had told Muriel, when speaking of his brother Arthur, had not left any disfiguring traces on the handsome young fellow who the next day came down for a little fresh air and home enjoyment. It was as much an excuse indeed as an occasion, he said laughing, when his father twitted him with 'malingering,' and declared he had never looked better in his life; and Lady Machell, who secretly loved this boy the best of her three children, was not disposed to quarrel even with an attack of gastric fever, happily over, which gave her the unexpected presence of her darling for a few summer weeks.

They were all very happy, sitting on the bench set against the house facing the crumbling balustrade, the broken steps and the desecrated Italian garden. Sir Gilbert forgot his money troubles; my lady her matrimonial schemes and pinched resources; Wilfrid his approaching plunge; and pretty Hilda her vague dreams of a fairy future where miracles would be the rule of life, and Love, now creeping naked and barefooted through the world, would be clad in royal raiment and shod with silver slippers; while the thoughts and interest of all were centred in the new arrival.

In old days this boy had been called the flower of the flock, and the flower of the flock he was still. As tall as Wilfrid, he was more lightly built, and though as powerful, more graceful; excelling him in those games and feats of strength which require dexterity as well as force, though perhaps in certain things, such as lifting heavy weights, putting the stone and the like, his brother would have distanced him. He was handsome too, where Wilfrid was plain; as handsome for a man as Hilda was beautiful for a woman; yet, as with Hilda, like but unlike his brother. His hair was of a bright brown, darker than Wilfrid's, fairer than Hilda's; his eyes were frank and as bright and blue as if they had been Irish eyes; his mouth was well shaped, where Wilfrid's was

coarse and heavy, and showed more tenderness, if less passion; in profile he was not unlike the young Nero, with a sweeter look and the outline of the chin less heavy.

He was, in truth, a fine specimen of the best kind of Englishman; one of a dominant race, and more likely to control circumstance than be controlled by it. With all his brighter temperament and greater tenderness of nature, he had his brother's indomitable will, and the masculine power of keeping a resolution when once made, and of not regretting consequences. He was emphatically a man in his own right, a man with his life in his own hands, rather than the son of a ruined baronet bound to work out his salvation by the law of social needs overcoming the rights of individualism and nature. He was the stuff of which iconoclasts are made—when the living God speaks.

After the first loving greetings were over, and the first questions about each other had been asked and answered, Arthur began on the people of the place, after the manner of those who return to the old home after a long absence. And after he had laughed at Baby Forbes and her stalwart Dinah, asked what new craze Guy Perceval had adopted, and what new sin the Constantines had discovered, he said:

‘And the people at Owlett—how do they go on? Any change?’

He asked this in a careless voice enough, his face bent over Brian the wolf-hound, who demanded his share of attention as arbitrarily as any Christian.

‘No, no change,’ said Lady Machell indifferently.

Neither Wilfrid nor Hilda spoke.

‘If anything, Mrs. Smith is more of a recluse than ever,’ said Sir Gilbert; ‘but the boy and girl are really very creditable young people. He is a little conceited yet—he always was, you know; but she is charming.’

‘She was always charming,’ repeated Arthur quietly; ‘and the world will soon knock the conceit out of him. It is only skin-deep, and, brought up as he has been, the wonder is that he is not worse.’

‘The Brown de Paumelles are going to give such a splendid ball, Arthur, on the fourth of June, when Miss de Paumelle comes of age,’ said Hilda, with sudden animation. ‘What a dear boy that brother Arthur of hers was! How wonderfully he read character! She knew of no one in the world who seemed to see things so clearly as he did; and how nice it is when people see things clearly!’

‘Yes, they are going to do the thing with great magnificence,’ said Lady Machell. ‘They are wonderfully liberal people and have excellent qualities.’

'It would not be amiss if old Brown had a few more *h*'s tacked to his qualities,' said Wilfrid, with a sneer.

He hated to hear his mother praise these people, knowing as he did the secret meaning of her eulogies.

'I know,' said Lady Machell quietly; for she could not go so far as to ignore the bone and marrow of her own existence, and contend that an *h* more or less was an item of no importance in the religion of the gentry. 'He is not a well-instructed man undoubtedly, but he is shrewd and clever in his own way, and very good-hearted.'

'Ostentatious,' said Wilfrid.

'Do you think so?' was her calm reply. 'There are always two ways of looking at everything. In this case I prefer the more favourable.'

'But tell me about the ball,' said Arthur. 'I suppose you are all going?'

'Not Hilda, of course,' answered the mother.

And poor Hilda had some trouble in remembering that she was a Machell whose first duty was owing to appearances and the authorities.

'Not our little one?' cried Arthur in a tone of disappointment.

'I wish, mother, that you would let Hilda go,' said Wilfrid in his slow heavy way.

'She is too young, my dear,' answered Lady Machell.

'She shall stop at home with me,' said Sir Gilbert, taking his daughter's hand in his. 'That will be better than losing her roses before their time.'

'I should like her to go. I wish you would let her; to please me,' reiterated Wilfrid.

Poor Lady Machell, whose real reason was the dress, though she threw it on the six months' gap between now and the magic date of eighteen, was unaffectedly disturbed. Above all things she wished to please Wilfrid at this moment and to put him in good humour. But the dress! Money was horribly scarce with Sir Gilbert just now, and she dreaded any extra outlay. Still, it was risking a little to secure a good deal; and if Wilfrid would only see his duty and fulfil it on that evening of the ball a new dress for Hilda might well be provided. After a moment's consideration her mind was made up. Turning to her son with her sweetest look she answered:

'Do you really wish it, Wilfrid? Hilda is young yet, according to my ideas of the proper time for a girl's introduction; but because you wish it—certainly. I should be sorry to deprive you of the pleasure of taking your sister to her first ball.'

'Thank you, mother,' said Hilda prettily.

She was too well tutored to say more—to show a milkmaid's frank glee at an outing; all the same, her heart beat with a girl's natural excitement at the prospect of her first ball where the secret prince of her unacknowledged dreams will be; and she quietly stole her hand into her brother's, and gave it a tender little pressure—which pleased him.

'Thank you, mother,' he said with a softened look, holding Hilda's hand in his, and carrying to her the loving thoughts of Muriel which filled his mind as they had governed his actions. 'I accept the grace as you have offered it. Let it be personal, then; and I am your debtor.'

'Now, little one, how much sleep will you have between this and then?' laughed Arthur, who knew nothing of the undercurrent, and had not read a word of all that eloquent writing between the lines.

'Arthur, what a tease you are!' was all the reply vouchsafed; but she smiled and looked sweet; and her brothers, who loved her as such men naturally would love the only girl of the house—and such a pretty creature too!—were glad, the one that he had given her pleasure, the other that he had made her smile. Had it not been for Lady Machell's ideas of discipline, and the rather tight hand that she held on the rein, Hilda would have been spoilt by the three men of the family long ago. But there was always the mother to come in as the restraining influence and pour cold water on the incipient flames of vanity and independence.

'If we could give a ball of only half the magnificence of this on Hilda's coming out!' sighed Lady Machell, thinking to drive in another nail.

'We came of age, Arthur and I, without the "customary festivities,"' said Wilfrid with his hard look.

'Yes; but a girl is different,' she answered. 'A woman's life belongs to society; you men are professional.'

'The profession of heir?' he asked; but, by the way in which he said it, he conveyed the idea of 'the inheritance of bankruptcy.'

'It would have been very delightful certainly if we could have celebrated your coming of age, my dear,' returned Lady Machell quietly, ignoring his unpleasant accent; 'it was impossible at the time, just as it is now to give a ball to introduce Hilda to the county, or to take her to London to present her—as ought to be. These things seem to be unimportant matters to you; to us women they are of supreme moment.'

'You must make this ball her introduction, mother. It will be "all in the family," as old Brown would say, and will come to the same thing in the end,' said Wilfrid with intense scorn, supreme bitterness.

Lady Machell looked into his face, and an evident wave of emotion swept over her own. She did not speak for a few moments, but after a short time she rose, and said to Wilfrid huskily :

‘Your arm, my dear. I want to speak to James.’

Wilfrid rose too, and offered her his arm, and the two silently passed out of sight and hearing.

Then the mother spoke.

‘Do I understand you rightly, Wilfrid?’ she said in a voice which in spite of herself broke and trembled. ‘Have you decided on making that step? Your father is so distressed for money that I do not like to ask him even for the trifle we shall need for Hilda’s dress. It is a humiliation to have to confess such a thing, standing as we do in the county; but it is true. Unless we can get money somehow, I do not see how we are to manage! Everything has turned ill of late. It is as if we were pursued by some evil fate.’

Tears were in her eyes, but she spoke with a certain well-bred dignity, troubled as she was. She was not of those who whine and whimper in misfortune; but nature will assert its rights in spite of birth or breeding, and eyes which will not let the tears fall are not always able to prevent their gathering.

Wilfrid laid his strong hand on hers, resting on his arm.

‘Do not fret, mother,’ he said grimly. ‘It has to be done, and will be.’

‘Ah, my boy, what a weight you have taken off my heart!’ she cried. ‘Your poor father! You have redeemed the family!’

‘And the price?’—he could not prevent himself from saying, with the bitter cynicism that was habitual to him.

‘I am sorry that it should be so heavy to you!’ she returned. ‘She is such a good, amiable, inoffensive little thing—you can do with her what you will—mould her into any shape that you wish her to take.’

‘We will drop that, mother,’ said Wilfrid hastily. ‘For herself, she is the last woman in the world that I would marry of my own choice; but, as you say, it is for the redemption of Machells, and I am willing to pay the price.’

‘It will win the blessing that it deserves,’ said Lady Machell soothingly. ‘An action which gives peace of mind to your father, places your sister in her rightful position, and restores the family to its old standing, must carry a blessing with it!’

‘If you are made happier, mother—you and my father and Hilda—I have my reward. But, as you know, I do not believe much in blessings or curses following on one’s actions outside their intrinsic wisdom or folly; and I can foresee no more blessing

to follow on this marriage of mine, than the payment of the money for which I sell myself.'

'Do not speak so bitterly, dear!' his mother pleaded. 'You do not wish to make me unhappy, Wilfrid?'

'No, mother. It is enough if one of us is unhappy. And I do not speak bitterly. I only look things in the face, and call them by their right names.'

'There are always two sides to everything, and two names for everything,' she said, as she had said before.

'Well, mother, you take the smooth and I will have the rough,' he answered. 'You may talk of a marriage between a man who sells himself for so much money to a woman whom he does not love, and a woman who sells herself for position to a man whom she does not love, as something worthy and that will bring a blessing with it—I cannot. I call it sale and barter; and so let it stand.'

'Assuredly,' thought Lady Machell to herself, as she pressed her son's arm with a gentle little touch that stood admirably for words, 'this dear boy of mine has the most awful temper, and knows better than any one in the world how to take the grace out of his actions. All the same, he will know before the end of his life that he has done well and wisely, and that money is a lasting good, whereas love —'

Here she sighed, and Wilfrid, thinking that he had wounded her, took her hand again in his, and said more cheerily:

'Never mind, dear mother! You know I was never a very amiable fellow; soft speeches are not much more in my line than soft ways. All will come right, I dare say; and if I marry even a woman that I do not love, I will do my best to make her happy, and to supply by care what is wanting in feeling.'

'Yes, I know, I know, my boy,' his mother answered, lifting up her face and taking in the mistake. 'Only I do not want you to be unhappy, dear.'

'What does it signify?' he said. 'A few years more or less, and the whole thing is at an end: but the family will be redeemed, and that will not be at an end.'

'Thank God, no!' said Lady Machell fervently; and then James coming in sight, the talk between mother and son ended, and the question as to Brussels sprouts or curly kail began.

But Wilfrid was pledged now to make that decisive offer of himself to Miss Brown de Paumelle, which my lady and the soap-boiler had so often hinted at together, and which each knew to be so ardently desired by the other; and, for the first time for the last thirty years, light was gradually coming into the Machell dark-

ness, and the things which had been so long stunted and awry bid fair to be well-nourished and smoothly laid. This off her hands, my lady felt that then she would have leisure to turn to the fit establishment of Hilda; but until she could dress and introduce her properly, how could she establish her? *Æsthetic* simplicity, evidenced in straight-cut robes and miniature mantillas, were all very well for a woman of her age and character; but *æsthetic* simplicity with Hilda would be both out of place and self-betraying. However, this difficulty was going to be smoothed over together with the rest, and in her own mind there was not a doubt that she could bring Guy Perceval to terms, when it pleased her to open the negotiation.

'After all, I am glad that your brother pleaded for you,' she said to Hilda, kissing her; a rare evidence of affection from her. 'You owe this pleasure entirely to him; of myself, I would have kept you back till you had passed your eighteenth birthday.'

'I would have been content to do as you desired, dear mother,' said Hilda sweetly. 'You always know the best.'

'All children do not give their mother credit for more wisdom than they themselves possess,' said Lady Machell a little severely. 'I have never had to complain of you, my dear.'

'And never shall have, mother,' said Hilda.

Lady Machell took her by both her hands, and looked at her fixedly.

'Do you promise me that, Hilda?' she said with an earnestness that startled the girl uncomfortably and seemed to forebode some kind of mysterious evil, she knew neither of what form nor name. 'Do you promise?' she repeated with increased earnestness.

'Yes,' said Hilda; 'you are my mother, and it is my duty to obey you.'

'And a Machell never breaks a word once given,' said Lady Machell, releasing her. 'My little Hilda will not be the first traitress to the traditions of the family.'

'I hope not, mother,' said Hilda quietly; but her heart had sunk like lead, and she knew that she had run her feet into a noose, and set the seal to the charter of her own sorrow.

CHAPTER V.

'HER BLUSH-ROSE FACE.'

WHISTLING along the road, and cutting at the wayside weeds like any schoolboy, while Brian the wolf-hound ran on before, the sedater mortal of the two, Arthur, the day after his arrival at Machells, set out alone for Owlett. It was odd that, having been

ill, he should have undertaken a walk which, though nothing for a Machell, was much for an invalid. Why had he not asked his mother to drive him over in the pony carriage?—it was Lady Machell who always drove. He had been a long time absent now—nearly a year; and one does not generally leave one's family the day after one's arrival—as a convalescent too, from what might have been a fatal illness, to cut across the country four miles away, telling no one where one is going.

Or why, if he must walk, did he not ask Wilfrid to walk with him? The two brothers had not always been good friends, certainly; but lately they had been on better terms than formerly. Perhaps the airs of authority assumed by Wilfrid in early youth had left a slight feeling in Arthur's mind which told against too much familiarity; but if so it was not acknowledged; and as manhood had placed them more on a level than they were as boys, and as Arthur had as much character as Wilfrid, if differently manifested, things had been greatly modified between them. Wilfrid's lordly supremacy had sunk into the simpler attitude of the mere elder brother and future head of the house, and the chronic rebellion of the other had passed into a natural assertion of equality which, as between twenty-four and thirty, no man could have resented.

Yes, he might have asked his brother to go with him to Owlett if he had not cared to derange his mother's plans by proposing the pony carriage; but he did neither. He preferred to go alone; though, had he been asked, he could scarcely have said why. There was nothing which he was likely to say to Muriel Smith that all the world might not hear; still less was it likely that she would say anything to him which might not be repeated to the whole family in the dingy drawing-room at Machells. For all that he would rather see her without mother or brother to watch her face or to read his. That sweet 'blush-rose face!' It had haunted him since he had last seen it as neither it nor any other had done before; as it had haunted Wilfrid for two years now. He could not banish it—in truth, he hardly tried. He had grown up side by side with Muriel, seeing her in the holidays when he came home from school, and fond of her as a brave high-spirited boy naturally is of a gentle and affectionate girl who is neither weak nor silly; but he had not been in love with her until last year. And then, when he had been down on leave for a few weeks, and had seen her in the full perfection of her girlhood, he had fallen in love with her as he had never fallen in love the many times when his fancy had been touched; and the passion held him, and would not leave him—tenacious as is all true passion.

He knew that this love of his would be called hopeless by the far-seeing, insane by the wise. The Smiths were not rich, and Muriel would have no fortune that a Machell could call fortune. He was poor, with no allowance beyond his pay, and, above all things, bound to marry money as the duty owing to his family. But deep down in his heart was that silent consciousness of the strong man which makes him feel himself superior to circumstance, and the master of his own fate—as if he can win for himself those good things which he has not inherited, and so compel to be his servant that Fortune who has not cared to be his benefactress.

There was just this difference between Wilfrid and Arthur: the former could sacrifice his love to the necessities of his position, and when he had finally taken action never show where the wound was; but the latter would sacrifice his inherited traditions for the sake of his love, and carve out his fortunes for himself. The one was the strong man controlling his desires because of duty to society; the other the strong man dominating society and circumstance alike by the assertion of himself. They represented two great sections of humanity, two great differences of character—those who can force themselves to do what they do not like; and those who can force fortune to give them what they want.

The ladies were at home when Arthur reached Owlett. They generally were at home; for even Muriel, young as she was, and energetic if not feverish, had become a little infected with her mother's quietism, and had somewhat fallen into the same close home-keeping manner of life. But then she was the kind of woman who, as maid or wife, is naturally fond of home.

Derwent was out, riding over to the Brown de Paumelles with the note of acceptance to their ball in his pocket. As Mrs. Smith had no valid objection to make to that acceptance which she could have explained to her son and daughter, she was obliged to say yes, when they asked her what they should do? and might they not go? But she wished that they were not going. Somehow, though not superstitious, she was full of forebodings about this ball, and wished that she could have prevented the whole thing, so far as her own household was concerned.

When Arthur went into the drawing-room he found it empty. Muriel was in the garden under the tulip-tree, her favourite seat; and her mother was upstairs in her own room. He passed through the open window as he used to do when a boy, and went across the lawn to where she sat. She looked up and saw him; and her face beamed like something suddenly wakened into life as she rose and went forward to meet him. His too, though pale at this time from his recent illness, yet, flushed for the moment by his walk

and the pleasant thoughts that had sent him whistling along the road like a schoolboy, was as bright as hers, and less controlled.

He took her hand and held it for a moment; both silent; while their eyes looked into each other, smiling, happy, content—all life seeming to be fulfilled at this moment—no past—no future—only the glad and sufficing present.

‘How glad I am to see you again looking so well!’ he then said, his rich voice veiled with a tenderness as great as that which shone in his eyes, and hers.

And indeed she was more beautiful than she had been even last year; hers being that kind of beauty which is lovely in blossom, flower, and fruit alike—from childhood to old age—because a beauty which owes as much to expression as to form, and more to character than to colour.

‘Thank you, yes,’ she answered in a pretty soft confusion that was pleasant and painful to feel—perhaps on the whole more pleasant than painful. ‘And you are better?’ looking at him tenderly, then away from him shyly.

‘Oh, I am right enough, thanks; had never very much the matter with me,’ said Arthur, not wishing that Muriel should believe him weak and to be pitied. Pity from her would be very dear, certainly; but, on the whole, he preferred that she should think him strong.

‘Captain Machell said that you had been very ill,’ she returned, raising her sweet eyes again to his.

‘One’s own people always deal in superlatives when one is away,’ he laughed. ‘I have had a slight pinch, but I soon pulled through, as you see.’

‘You are paler than you were—and thinner,’ said Muriel, in an unconvinced kind of way.

‘Well, I have been ill, you see; there is no denying the fact; only not quite so ill perhaps as they seem to have imagined at home. I am all right now.’

‘Yes, you have been ill indeed, I can see that! And you have walked all the way here to-day? How brave of you! But you always were brave—as a boy, even.’

She said this with rather more feeling than she herself knew. Pity and admiration had swept down the barriers for that one self-betraying moment, and she showed her real self with more frankness than she had ever done before.

His face flushed with pleasure.

‘I am glad that you saw anything good in me as a boy,’ he said, trying to speak with indifference. ‘To my own remembrance of things, I was an awful cub!’



ARTHUR AND MURIEL.

‘Were you? If you were, I suppose we all were much the same, and so could not judge of each other. For my part, I do not remember.’

She smiled as she said this. She did not think that either Arthur or Derwent had been an ‘awful cub.’ Perhaps she herself had been silly and tiresome at times. Girls generally are so to boys. But she was not very sure what she had been. She was not a very introspective person; on the contrary, she was one who knew what she felt rather than analysed what she was. Thus, her personality of to-day was not a very different thing from her personality of ten years ago, seeing that she had not spent her time in taking spiritual photographs by the way. No, she did not think that any of them had been cubs; neither the boys nor herself—but certainly not the boys.

‘Girls are always angels,’ said Arthur, meaning that one girl was. ‘One would never apply such a word to them. It is only boys who are the nuisances.’

‘I do not think there is much difference between them,’ she answered, with the vague feeling of defending Derwent and himself. ‘Boys are stronger and ruder perhaps, and girls are gentler and not so frank.’

‘I do not think that you ever wanted frankness,’ said Arthur. ‘I remember you were always trusted when you said anything. And I never remember an instance where you broke your word or were caught out in a falsehood.’

She blushed and looked down. It was pleasant to hear him speak of her so kindly; as pleasant as it had been to him to hear her say that he had been always brave, even as a boy.

‘I had never any temptation to be deceitful,’ she said. ‘We were not afraid of anyone. I had other faults, if not this; do not you think that every kind of character, like every age, has its own special faults?’ she continued, anxious to get away from the subject of herself. Deprecation looked like an underhand asking for compliments, and she could not accept praise as her due.

‘I do not think that women have so many faults as men,’ Arthur answered, always meaning her. ‘Certainly they are not so selfish.’

‘Perhaps not,’ she said. ‘We are not tried as men are. They go into the world and we stay at home; and it would be hard indeed if we had the same faults as they. We have ours and they have theirs; and so with our virtues.’

‘And, after all, humanity is the best thing we know,’ said Arthur. He looked as if he thought there was nothing much beyond that especial bit of humanity before him at this moment.

'Your brother would say the worst, and make dogs and horses the best!' said Muriel, laughing.

'Oh, Wilfrid has always had a touch of the misanthrope in him,' Arthur laughed back in return. 'He is none the worse at heart for it. It is only a habit of thought, not a principle of action; and that makes all the difference, don't you know? He is one of the most honourable and generous fellows breathing when you can get below that rough kind of husk which he puts on:—I don't know why; for affectation I think—only that he is not affected.'

'It would be better if he were,' said Muriel; 'if his ideas are real, they are dreadful. If they are taken merely for show, that is another matter. But even then, why should he decry human nature as he does?'

Arthur pulled his moustache and laughed. He was not disposed to quarrel with Muriel for not thinking his elder brother perfection. He wished her to like him—would be very sorry if she did not—if she did not like them all indeed; but he would not break his heart if her liking for Wilfrid were, on the whole, more tepid than fervent, leaving her free to criticise and discern; in nowise like that blind uncritical devotion which in his heart—he being a Machell and one of a dominant race—he felt was the right kind of thing from a woman to the man whom she loved.

'And, after all, it is a foolish thing to pretend that dogs and horses are better than men and women!' said Arthur, pulling Brian's ears affectionately. 'They are invaluable in their way, but I confess I prefer my own species!'

'So do I,' said Muriel simply, patting the hound's head.

After this the conversation passed from Wilfrid and his misanthropy—this last including his exaggerated affection for animals—on to Muriel herself: the books that she had read, the rides that she had taken, what she had thought of this, and what she had felt about that, all with an eagerness of inquiry which showed how anxious Arthur was to be abreast of her present state, and to know every step of the way that she had gone since he had last seen her.

And everything that she said, every opinion that she expressed, every sentiment and feeling seemed to him the perfection of what an English girl of the best type should think and feel. He had always thought Muriel Smith charming and beautiful; and since last year her manners, temper, and that fair flower-like face had possessed his heart as the dearest remembrance, the sweetest vision he could conjure up. Now her intelligence fascinated him as much as the rest; and as he listened to her girlish views on this or on that, he said to himself that, what with her beauty, her modesty,

her nobleness of nature, her quiet saintliness of life, that strange sympathy with himself which made her his sweeter echo—the woman to his man—and now her eminently just and true ideas, she was simply the perfection of womanhood: there could be none beyond and never had been.

By which it may be seen how far gone the young fellow was, when he could accept the crude ideas of an innocent and home-bred girl as true and just expositions of life; ideas with which a man of the world could sympathise; ideas which represented anything but her own innocent ignorance of things as they are and activity of imagination [as to what they are not. Only love can make these morning cloudlets do duty for solid structures, and give intrinsic value to the mind of nineteen. But what would life be without this creative faculty—this power given by love of making morning clouds into solid structures? Grant that its dreams pass and its fancies fade. Grant that we create our own ideal and love that which does not exist outside our own belief—it is better to dream and to love, even though the moment has to come when we must wake and see, than to live without illusions and to die, never having known happiness. To each sweet its bitter; to the joy of loving, the pain of loss and the destroying touch of truth—but at all risks, the joy of loving!

There is no more delightful hour in life than that of an unconfessed but mutual love. It was the hour which these two young people were passing now in the garden at Owlett. They were learning each other deeper and deeper by heart as the moments flew; and their companion and their teacher was Love. The world was an enchanted home where only beauty, and that inward blessedness which comes from youth and the first stirrings of true passion, are to be found. There was as little self-consciousness in her state as of self-torture in his. She had not stopped, startled by some sudden revelation, to see where she was standing and to what sweet danger she was drifting; and he had not come out from the phase of feeling to that of calculation, from the happiness of loving for his own part to the torture of doubt for hers, or the misery of uncertainty as to the possibilities of the future. They were in the drifting stage, when souls let themselves go where the current of sweet waters takes them, when they look neither before nor after, but are content to feel and forget to fear. Everything about them was so much added to their present store, their future garnering. The birds sang with a meaning which they had never had before; the flowers were messengers sent by nature to the loving; the sunshine was their happiness; the tender shadows were as that something lying unexpressed in their thoughts; everything seemed

to speak to them one same language, which Muriel heard without fully comprehending and Arthur knew without analysing.

So the hour passed as if it had been an hour of music and poetry and beautiful pictures and stately shows; as if it had been the fulfilment of the whole meaning and glory of life:—as was it not?

As tender as Derwent's passion for Hilda, the love between these two was somehow more robust and purposeful; and, with all the hopelessness that seemed to be round it, when looked at as a fact not a feeling, had more practicability in the future. Muriel was more to be relied on by Arthur than Hilda by Derwent. Of the two she loved her mother better than Hilda loved hers; yet she would be more faithful to her lover if difficulties should arise between him and that mother. Hilda was a Machell, born and bred in the faith that the welfare of the family was to be preferred to individual happiness; and that the obedience of a daughter to her mother was as much a part of good breeding as of good conduct. She would not hold by her lover against her mother's refusal as Muriel would; but then Muriel would reconcile the two seeming opposites, and if obedient to the one would also be faithful to the other. Her simplicity of nature, her truthfulness and straightforwardness, would make it impossible for her to be treacherous or disloyal to either. Down in the depths of Hilda's nature lay that strong vein of the Machells which, in my lady, showed itself in such calm acquiescence in their broken fortunes as looked like choice and expressed itself in enjoyment, yet which also determined that, come what might, her children should marry money; in Wilfrid, in his misanthropy, his moral scepticism, and his ability to force his will and sacrifice his personal happiness to the social exigencies of his position; in Arthur, in his power to lead his own life, notwithstanding inherited circumstances, and his determination to master fate and compel fortune. She was like her mother both morally and personally. Girl as she was, with all the romance in her as yet to the surface, before expediency had taken to itself righteousness or reason had demanded to be heard rather than feeling, she could not possibly be persuaded into an imprudence. She was her mother's daughter and her brother's sister; and when the time came Derwent would have to reckon with more than love.

But with these two in the garden listening to the birds in between words that meant everything to the soul and nothing to the sense, when once that die was cast there would be no going back for the needs of family position, the dread of poverty, or the like. What might be when that future for which this woman

upstairs was waiting—had been waiting for all these fourteen years—should have come, that was another matter. 'Meanwhile the linnets and the thrushes sang in the branches of the budding trees, the sun shone, the flowers bloomed, and the luminous shadows went and came like Muriel's smiles and blushes, the tender light in his eyes and the sweet shy happiness in hers.

After a time Mrs. Smith came down from her room and joined them. The post at Grantley Bourne reached Owlett only late in the afternoon; and while Muriel had been sitting with Arthur under the tulip-tree, the postman had brought a letter for the lady of the house, that rarest circumstance of all in the life of Owlett. It was a letter which tried her composure as it had never been tried since she had lived here. It made her weep as she had not wept for years; kiss her husband's portrait with a passionate outburst which no one who knew her only as she was in her outward life would have imagined possible to one so self-controlled, so still. It made her now wring her hands as she thought of her children, now laugh hysterically and say 'My love! my love!' as she thought of her husband. It transformed her from the quiet Mrs. Smith of Owlett, as the world knew her, to the impassioned soul torn between two great loves, two contrary duties, as she alone knew herself to be. But she had to press her emotion back into the depths of her aching heart, as she had pressed it back for so long now, and to fix her face into the impassive mask habitual to her.

When she came downstairs, and walked across the lawn to where the two young people were sitting, no ordinary observer could have seen more than that she was paler even than usual, and that the circles round her eyes were darker. Only Muriel caught a something underneath the mask which was unaccustomed; and a look of anxiety crossed her own face as she met her mother midway on the lawn, and laid her hand caressingly on her arm.

'I did not like to disturb you, dear mamma,' she said tenderly, and as if in apology for her own happy hour and that unaccustomed something beneath the mask. 'Grant said that he had told you Mr. Machell was here, and I did not like to tease you by sending up to you again.'

'I was engaged, and could not come sooner,' said her mother, shaking hands with Arthur, but glancing from each to each with a quick look that shone like a lightning spark for just a moment, and then passed into that steady gaze which always seemed as if it sought to conceal something in herself by a forced attention to others.

What did that glance of hers suspect, and what did it see? What was there in his face, flushed and radiant in spite of the languor left by his illness, and what in Muriel's soft and tender as

music, which made her shiver in the sun as if this warm May day had been one of pitiless December? Whatever it was, it shook her ordinary statuesque stillness for a moment, for she shivered perceptibly, while a spasm flickered over her face, as she sat down on the garden seat and looked as if she were about to faint.

'It is nothing,' she then said to Muriel, in answer to her anxious 'Are you ill, mamma?'—'Only a little shivering fit; nothing more.'

On which Arthur suggested that she had taken cold; and Mrs. Smith said calmly: 'Yes, I think I have;' and shuddered again, this time artificially.

After this the conversation passed on to uninteresting subjects, for though Mrs. Smith talked well on all the current topics of the day and had her own ideas on politics, and formed an independent judgment, and not a bad one, on books and current events—what were even the 'burning questions' of foreign diplomacy or home agitation, or the most interesting poem, novel, or memoir of the season, to two young people who had been wandering in an enchanted wood with only love as their guide? It was all very pleasant intellectually, no doubt; but men in love are not intellectual, and care more for silly little speeches and absurd little looks and blushes from the beloved than for the most eloquent disquisitions from anyone else.

No, the glory of the day had passed now; the door of the temple was shut, and the music and incense had died—the one into silence, the other into ashes. But for all that Arthur still lingered. It was too great happiness to sit here in the Owlett garden, merely looking at Muriel's sweet face and hearing her soft voice, to abandon sooner than he need. So he stayed on till the servant brought out afternoon tea; and then, just as Muriel was pouring it out, Derwent rode up to the door;—which made another excuse in his own eyes as well as in those of Mrs. Smith, which were not so easily blinded.

Handsome, picturesque, slender, dark, his young man's vanity no more offensive than the display made by a beautiful bird of his plumage, Derwent was an admirable foil, because such a direct contrast, to Arthur Machell. When Muriel looked at them both—the dear brother who had been her lifelong love, her playmate and protector, and that other, not exactly a brother, stronger, with more richness of colouring, more frankness of temper, more joyousness of nature, more power of command and fearlessness—she thought that she was more to be envied than anyone she knew for owning two such men:—the one as her brother, and the other—well, as her acquaintance; perhaps she might even say friend.

As for the two young men, they met with strange cordiality. The Machell boys, as boys, had never specially affected Derwent. He was of a different nature and temperament altogether from them; and though he was manly enough in his own way, it was a way that was less robust than theirs, and which they despised as boys do despise differences. Then he had not been to school, and so was not up in schoolboy slang and traditions; and his sister was too much his companion; and his tutor was a prig; and, though they could not deny that he rode well to hounds, fenced with skill as well as with consummate grace, and was a dead shot, still they took exceptions where they could, and had never been quite cordial in the days of what Wilfrid called their cubhood. But for the last year or so, both brothers had veered round from contempt to admiration. Even Wilfrid, hard and grim as he was, excused Derwent's vanity, and upheld him as a fine fellow intrinsically in spite of his patent faults; and Arthur thought him immensely improved since he saw him last, and felt quite affectionately for him as he went across the lawn to meet him, and hoped that Muriel would be pleased to see his greeting.

Derwent, on his side, forgot that he had ever thought the Machell men, as boys, less than the heroes which it was pleasant to him to think that Hilda's brothers were. In the days when youth measures everything by its own self-made standard, finding the stronger coarse, the weaker effeminate, the more ignorant dolts, the better informed prigs, he too had had his fling at both Wilfrid and Arthur; but now he met Hilda's brother with as much cordiality as was shown him; and whatever else might go astray, assuredly the friendship between the young men of the two houses would be safe!

A pleasant half-hour followed; but after this time Arthur, not being really strong yet, flagged suddenly; the false energy of excitement which hitherto had kept him up gave way, and his face was so pale, his figure so listless, that it was evidently impossible for him to walk back to Machells.

'I will drive you home, Mr. Machell,' said Mrs. Smith with ill-concealed embarrassment.

She was too true a woman not to be pitiful to a man's suffering and weakness, but all the same she did not want to be seen by Lady Machell driving with her son. Such intercourse as she had with her neighbours was, as has been said, on one side only; they came to her, she very rarely went to them; and with that letter in her pocket she did not wish to seem to be on terms of intimacy with anyone, least of all with a young man of the superior family—always the superior family, however poor.

'That will be very kind,' said Arthur, looking at Muriel. 'I hope that it will not derange your plans for the afternoon? But honestly I feel as if Machells was a very long way off!' laughing as he wiped his forehead and upper lip, wet with those self-betraying damps of weakness.

'No, it deranges nothing. I will take you with pleasure,' said Mrs. Smith mechanically, in her turn glancing at Muriel, and meeting a pair of wistful eyes that said as distinctly as a voice:

'And I too, mamma?' After a moment's pause she added slowly, speaking to Derwent with a certain feeling of taking shelter behind him from the dangers lying round her: 'Order the carriage, my boy. We can all go—you too.'

'Willingly,' said Derwent, dashing towards the house with alacrity, looking for the sunshine on his own account, and expecting to see Hilda for at least a moment. And he was his mother's refuge against the danger of an undesirable love affair between Owletts and Machells!

He was mistaken, poor boy. His mother took Arthur only to the second lodge, and there, looking at her watch, set him down with affected hurry, as if she had not time to drive through the shrubbery to the house. And in so doing she planted the garden of her young son's soul with weeds of bitterness and thorns of disappointment; such as only those know who are in that pitiable state wherein trifles are matters of life or death, making the soul godlike in its blessedness or the prey of the demons in its misery—that pitiable state which is called "being in love."

CHAPTER VI.

'I MUST WATCH AND SEE.'

If for any reason—who shall say what?—Mrs. Smith wished to keep secret from Lady Machell the apparently insignificant fact that she had driven her invalid son home, there was little likelihood of doing so. As Arthur was shaking hands and wishing Muriel good-bye in the phaeton, the pony-carriage from Tower came in sight, and Miss Dinah Forbes, in a costume of such hybrid character as made her look like a man at a distance and not much unlike one near at hand, appeared on the scene. She was sitting very high in the small low pony carriage, her feet planted firmly against the splash-board, holding the reins in her two hands like a coachman sawing at a hard-mouthed runaway horse, for all that her docile pony had a mouth of velvet, and would as soon have thought of jumping through the hoops of a circus as of going a step faster than it was forced to go. But it gave her the masculine

air in which her soul delighted ; and strong-minded as Miss Dinah Forbes was, she was not above the weakness of affectation in her own line.

She was driving Aurora, who made a striking contrast to her sister, dressed as she was in a pale blue muslin much frilled and flounced and with a deep red sash round her waist like a girl ; a juvenile hat was set far back on her head, surmounting her multitudinous curls and puffs like an aureole of straw ; and a string of coral beads was round her throat to match the sash ;—such glaring admixture of colours being part of the method by which she asserted her juvenility and called attention to a complexion which had once been like milk and roses, and was now like ancient wax.

‘ Well met ! ’ said Miss Dinah in her deep bass voice, raising her whip by way of general salutation. ‘ And when did my friend Mr. Arthur return ? ’

‘ Yesterday,’ said Arthur, as he came down from the one carriage and went to the other. ‘ How are you, Miss Aurora ? ’

Miss Aurora laughed and flirted her fan. She always carried both a fan and a smelling bottle, even in winter. She had learnt how to use a fan with creditable dexterity, and she had a pretty hand and wrist ; and of what use is an accomplishment or a beauty if you do not let the world profit by your possession ?

‘ I am quite well, thank you, Mr. Arthur,’ she said coquettishly. ‘ And you ?—a little pale, I think, but as beau garçon as ever.’

‘ Thanks ; you were always good to me, Miss Aurora,’ said Arthur gallantly ; and Miss Aurora’s face put on the look which a girl has when she blushes.

‘ We are old friends now,’ she said with a kind of apology in her voice and manner, as if making an excuse for her too evident interest.

‘ And good ones,’ said Arthur.

‘ Now, Mr. Arthur, if you are going to flirt with Baby I must interfere. I allow no one to flirt with Baby without my leave.’

‘ Suppose, then, I have asked it. It will make matters so much easier,’ laughed Arthur.

‘ Oh ! Mr. Arthur,’ said Miss Aurora, covering all her face but her eyes with her fan.

‘ Upon my word you have not improved in modesty, young man, since you have assumed Her Majesty’s uniform ! ’ said Miss Forbes. ‘ Mrs. Smith, I hope you keep your daughter out of the way of such a dangerous young man as this ! I shall look sharp after my little girl, and I advise you to look sharp after yours ! ’

On which she laughed that deep-bayed laugh of hers which

always betrayed her whereabouts half-a-mile off; while Aurora put in her shrill treble notes as the *fioritura*, and looked at Muriel in girlish sympathy—the two young things with their respective guardians denying them the harmless pleasure of their age!

Miss Dinah Forbes was the only person in or about Grantley Bourne who ever dared to take a liberty with Mrs. Smith. The impenetrable reserve which this last held with all the world acted as a 'fender' that kept off undesirable familiarities of all kinds; but Miss Forbes, masculine, rough in grain, and, though quick-sighted enough, insensitive for her own part and indifferent to the sensitiveness of others, cared nothing for a manner which every one else was compelled to respect; and having the fixed intention of 'routing her up,' as she phrased it, whenever they met, effectually fulfilled her desire by generally making the lady of Owlett secretly angry and patently cooler than was even her wont. Mrs. Smith was not a woman who allowed herself the luxury of either likes or dislikes for her fellow-creatures. She cultivated quietism too carefully for that. But she had a feeling of physical repulsion for Miss Forbes that amounted at times to loathing. They were at the two ends of the scale of womanhood, and women are by nature intolerant of differences. To this coarse joke, this bit of horseplay so detestable to a person of her nature, she deigned no reply. She sat there, looking straight before her, with no more sign of life than if she had been a mummy or a statue; but Muriel blushed deeply and with unaccountable distress; and the colour in Arthur's face was the reflection of her own.

'Oh, Miss Forbes, that is very cruel!' he said lightly, trying to laugh it off as something that had neither hidden sting nor secret meaning. 'I am sure Miss Aurora does not think so ill of me!'

'We will ask Muriel what *she* thinks,' said Miss Forbes, her keen eyes fixed on Muriel. 'Do you think Mr. Arthur Machell dangerous, my dear?'

'No,' said Muriel simply; but her face was still crimson, and still bore the same look of distress that had struck Miss Forbes as being odd and meaning more than it showed;—hence had been the spur by which her thoughts had been touched and her words set in motion.

'Perhaps it would be better if you did,' she said drily. 'We are sometimes in the most danger when we see least of it.'

Before Muriel could reply, if indeed she would have replied at all, Mrs. Smith, bowing in her stiffest manner, said in a voice that only intensified that manner:

'I must wish you good morning, Mr. Machell; good morning

Miss Forbes, Miss Aurora. Home, Jones'—leaning back in her carriage and turning her head away from the group.

Whereupon Miss Forbes gave a man's ejaculation and whistled 'Phew!' between her teeth and her lips; and, rubbing her nose with her whip, said in a stage aside:

'So that's the way the cat jumps, is it?'

Meanwhile the Owlett carriage turned and carried off its occupants, Muriel feeling that the day had suddenly darkened into night as it had already darkened for Derwent, while Arthur wondered why he felt his weakness all at once so much, and was so terribly 'run down' without extra cause.

'Now, Mr. Arthur, jump in and I'll drive you to the house,' said Miss Forbes, who noticed his sudden pallor, and whose heart was as good as her style was bad. 'You are looking awfully fagged, young man. What have you been up to, boy? No good, I'll be sworn! I never saw a more washed-out-looking individual in my life. Come, tumble in! You don't look fit for marching orders, any way.'

'I have been ill, but I can walk to the house, thanks,' said Arthur briefly. He too hated Miss Forbes at this moment, and in spite of his better knowledge ignored her good heart, and only recognized and resented her bad style.

'Nonsense; jump in, I say. Do you want me to bundle you in with my own hands? You can sit at Baby's feet; you're not the first young fellow that has sat there, or would like to be there if he only could get leave;' she added, with a fond look at the once pretty and now faded doll by her side, who to her eyes was still eighteen; no more; fresh and frank; the envy of women; and the admiration of men, as she had been thirty years ago.

'It is a shame to load your beast with my weight,' remonstrated Arthur; but Miss Dinah, saying, 'Stuff!' moved Aurora's skirts and made a place for the young man, who to avoid farther parley took it, and so was carried a little ignominiously to the house.

'We have brought your young soldier out of all sorts of fire and danger, Lady Machell,' said Miss Dinah for her first greeting, as she strode into the shabby drawing-room where my lady sat in costume as usual, and pretty Hilda, bending over her drawing, spent half the time that should have been given to her trees of doubtful nomenclature, to surreptitious sketches of masculine profiles, which were a cross between Derwent Smith and a barber's block.

'Ah!' said Lady Machell looking at her son; 'what were they?'

'First, the perils of woman's eyes,' rolled out Miss Dinah; 'and

then those of failing strength. I rescued him from the hands of our sphinx, the lady of Owlett, and her pretty daughter—and upon my life that young person looked superb to-day! She is almost as pretty as Baby; and that is saying a great deal, at least in my eyes. And then he looked like fainting; so I carried him off, and here he is.'

'I am much obliged to you, Miss Forbes,' said Lady Machell rather gravely. 'I do not know which would be the more disastrous of the two dangers you have mentioned; perhaps the former,' trying to laugh, but not succeeding in making her laugh natural.

'If you rescued me from one peril it was only to throw me into another,' said Arthur gallantly, putting on a devoted kind of look as he sat down by Miss Aurora, who laughed, and lightly touched her mouth with her fan, and said, 'Tais-toi, polisson!' with the idea that she was using the proper phrase for the occasion.

'Well, I don't know about that,' observed Miss Dinah with a sly wink. 'I saw sundry blushes, and all the rest of it, that would make me look twice where I look once now, if I caught them flying between you and Baby, I promise you, Mr. Arthur. You young men in Her Majesty's service are dangerous young fellows—for the most part wolves, Mr. Arthur, wolves—and require a great deal of looking after.'

'Love laughs at locksmiths, Miss Forbes,' he said saucily; 'so where is the good of it all? *Che sarà sarà!* There is a fate in such things, and it is only wise to recognise one's fate!'

'Rather a dangerous doctrine to be preached in the presence of the young, Arthur,' said Lady Machell with a warning glance to Hilda, who, looking divinely innocent and unconscious, was secretly taking it all in as manna whereon her soul fed daintily. Love is so much more delightful than prudence to a young creature in that crude stage of mental being when feeling is the ruler of gods and men, and facts the helots at his feet!

But Arthur taking the hint changed the conversation, and, while the visit of the ladies from Tower lasted, prevented it from falling again on the Smiths, where Miss Dinah would willingly have conducted it. For Miss Dinah, like many old maids of her stamp who have never known love on their own account nor even desired to know it, lived in a perpetual atmosphere of not ill-natured suspicion; and saw an incubating love affair if two young people of the opposite sex spoke together for a quarter of an hour, or looked at each other with more interest than they would have looked at two dummies at Madame Tussaud's. So far as this spirit of premature discovery went, she was the very Marplot of the place, and had nipped more than one promising affair in the bud

by inviting attention to it in those early days of its existence when it could grow only in silence and darkness, and when to speak of it was to destroy it. But if she was a nuisance she was not malicious, and we learn to be thankful for small mercies in a life made up mainly of large cruelties.

At last the visit came to an end, and then Lady Machell's turn began.

'How did you meet the Smiths, Arthur?' she asked.

'I called there,' answered Arthur, feeling uncomfortably conscious of a return to boyhood, when disagreeable confession was sure to entail a scolding.

'You walked all that way in your present state?' she cried reprovingly.

'Yes, the day was fine and I was tempted,' he said; so far disingenuous in that he had set out with the intention of going, but speaking now as if his going had been an afterthought.

'How could you be so imprudent?' she said with displeasure. 'A walk like that, and you in your state of health! It is enough to bring on a relapse. And to the Smiths of all the people in the place—the least desirable acquaintances we have!'

'Mother!' he remonstrated, while Hilda turned nervously to her drawing, and smudged her barber's blocks into so many tattooed New Zealanders.

'Surely they are!' said Lady Machell, lifting up her eyebrows. 'There is not a word to be said against Mrs. Smith, I admit. No one could have lived a more blameless life than hers has been ever since she came; still, there is something in her history that does not come to the surface; and they have no money.'

This last was a slip. It is difficult always to prevent the tongue from speaking of what the heart feels and the brain thinks; and the cardinal defect of families with young men and marriageable maidens came unawares to the front when Lady Machell spoke of the disqualifications of the Smiths of Owlett.

'Their want of money does not make them undesirable acquaintances, so far as I can see,' said Arthur drily. 'Seeing that they pay their way, live well, and do not borrow, we can hardly say that they want money. They may not be rich, like the Brown de Paumelles, for instance: but they are as well off as the Tower people, and no one hears them spoken of as specially wanting money.'

'Well, let that pass. All the same it was an imprudent thing of you to do, Arthur. The walk is a great deal too long for any one just recovering from such an illness as yours,' said Lady Machell, going back to her safest position.

'Not as it turned out, mother,' he answered with a creditable attempt at indifference. 'Mrs. Smith drove me home, so I had only the one way; and I think that did me good rather than not.'

'You can make it nothing but imprudent,' she repeated.

'I am sorry, mother, if I have made you anxious,' was his reply, getting up from his seat and going over to her; and when there, putting his arms round her and kissing her as he used when a boy.

'My boy!' she said fondly, passing her hand down his handsome face. 'You know that all I ever feel or think—or fear, darling—is for your own good. What other motive can I have?'

'None, mother. Do you not think I understand you?' was his reply; 'only—fear nothing; fear is waste of time.'

On which, not caring to trust himself to a longer discussion, he left the room as troubled at heart as both Hilda and his mother herself. She would never consent!—never!—neither she nor his father. If the love of which he had become more than ever conscious to-day was to be confessed and acted on, it must be in direct defiance to their wishes, and with the foregone conclusion of abandoning his profession and his family. Whatever else 'Her Majesty's uniform,' as Miss Dinah Forbes called it, may bring, it does not bring much solid pelf; and unless he married money, Arthur knew as well as his mother that he could not marry at all, as things were. But the alternative of marrying money as the first necessity—selling himself, in fact, to a rich wife—was simply impossible to such a man as Arthur Machell. Better remain all his life a bachelor, he thought, with a deep flush on his handsome face, than commit an action which would destroy his self-respect for ever. No, if even he gave up Muriel, he would not do that other thing; if he sacrificed her love, he would keep his honour intact. But he would not give her up. Was no way open to him by which he could gain her and keep his self-respect? Was it absolutely necessary that he should be only a poor officer in the army and nothing else?—He was young, strong, energetic, fearless. England was not the universe, and fair fortunes might be won in other quarters of the globe than Europe. He would be sorry to leave them here at the old house, but a man's life belongs to himself; and the best love to be shown to those whose name you bear is to be worthy of that name, and bring increased lustre to its setting. To hang about the mother's skirts, to give the father a helping hand in his gouty old age, is this all that a man is born into the world to do when there are others consecrated to the office and bound to carry on the business of the house and the succession of the family? He loved his own people—no

man better—but he did not hold it his duty to moulder away his life in England that he might see them occasionally; nor yet his duty to continue in the army on starvation pay because no Machell had ever sullied his hands with trade, and commerce and the colonies were alike abhorrent to the family traditions.

He thought it all out, and he ended by deciding to wait until he was surer of Muriel's feeling for him: he thought, he hoped, he believed, but he was not sure; when he was, he knew what he should do.

Meanwhile, the rough jokes of Miss Forbes, striking so close to the truth as they did, gave Lady Machell ideas which she too kept to herself, but which she thought it would be as well not to lose sight of when planning out the possibilities of the future.

And yet she could believe nothing to the discredit of Arthur! She loved this boy so much!—the flower of the flock as he had always been. He was the one of all her children the surest to do right; she could not doubt him. Still, the ladies of Tower had flung their little darts; which stuck; and though she hated herself for suspecting that Arthur, her pride and her delight, should be so lost to the sense of what was due to himself as a Machell and to her as his mother, as to think seriously of a portionless girl like Muriel Smith, yet for all that it was her duty to watch him closely; and now that she had had ideas instilled into her, to test their essential value. Wilfrid, who was not her favourite, was prepared to do his duty like an honourable man and a dutiful son; would her dear boy be less noble than his brother? Impossible! She would not believe it of him without proof; and she had had none yet. He had spoken of the Smiths naturally, without hesitation or forced indifference. She had watched him; and his face had not changed; and if he had had an unspoken thought she would have seen it. Was she not his mother who had studied him since his boyhood, and knew every turn of his mind, every feeling, every thought? Poor mother! How many others have believed the same thing of their sons, and insisted on the barn-door qualities of the bold and roving tassel gentles which they have watched with such care and love! All the same, those ideas implanted by the ladies of Tower came again and again unbidden; and between sleeping and waking her last thought was: 'I must watch and see!'

(To be continued.)

Other Worlds and other Universes.

BY RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

If anyone shall gravely tell me that I have spent my time idly in a vain and fruitless inquiry after what I can never become sure of, the answer is that at this rate he would put down all natural philosophy, as far as it concerns itself in searching into the nature of such things. In such noble and sublime studies as these, 'tis a glory to arrive at probability, and the search itself rewards the pains. But there are many degrees of probable, some nearer to the truth than others, in the determining of which lies the chief exercise of our judgment. And besides the nobleness and pleasure of the studies, may we not be so bold as to say that they are no small help to the advancement of wisdom and morality?—HYGHEMS, *Conjectures concerning the Planetary Worlds*.

THE interest with which astronomy is studied by many who care little or nothing for other sciences is due chiefly to the thoughts which the celestial bodies suggest respecting life in other worlds than ours. There is no feeling more deeply seated in the human heart—not the belief in higher than human powers, not the hope of immortality, not even the fear of death—than the faith in realms of life where other conditions are experienced than those we are acquainted with here. It is not vulgar curiosity or idle fancy that suggests the possibilities of life in other worlds. It has been the conviction of the profoundest thinkers, of men of highest imagination. This mystery of the star depths has had its charm for the mathematician as well as for the poet; for the exact observer as for the most fruitful theoriser; nay, for the man of business as for him whose life is passed in communing with nature. If we analyse the interest with which the generality of men inquire into astronomical matters apparently not connected with the question of life in other worlds, we find in every case that it has been out of this question alone or chiefly that that interest has sprung. The great discoveries made during the last few years respecting the sun, for example, might seem remote from the subject of life in other worlds. It is true that Sir William Herschel thought the sun might be the abode of living creatures; and Sir John Herschel even suggested the possibility that the vast streaks of light called the solar willow-leaves, objects varying from two hundred to a thousand miles in length, might be living creatures whose intense lustre was the measure of their intense vitality; but modern discoveries have rendered all such theories untenable. The sun is presented to us as a mighty furnace, in whose fires the most stubborn elements are not merely melted but vaporised.

The material of the sun was analysed, the motions and changes taking place on his surface were examined, the laws of his being were determined. How, it might be asked, was the question of life in other worlds involved in these researches? The faith of Sir David Brewster in the sun as the abode of life being dispelled, how could discoveries respecting the sun interest those who care about the subject of the plurality of worlds? The answer to these questions is easily found. The real interest which solar researches have possessed for those who are not astronomers has resided in the evidence afforded respecting the sun's position as the fire, light, and life of the system of worlds whereof our world is one. The mere facts discovered respecting the sun would be regarded as so much dry detail were they not brought directly into relation with our earth and its wants, and therefore with the wants of the other earths which circle round the sun; but when thus dealt with they immediately excite attention and interest. I do not speak at random in asserting this, but describe the result of widely ranging observation. I have addressed hundreds of audiences in Great Britain and America on the subject of recent solar discoveries, and I have conversed with many hundreds of persons of various capacity and education, from persons almost uncultured to men of the highest intellectual power; and my invariable experience has been that solar research derives its chief interest when viewed in relation to the sun's position as the mighty ruler, the steadfast sustainer, the beneficent almoner of the system of worlds to which our earth belongs. It is the same with other astronomical subjects. Few care for the record of lunar observations, save in relation to the question whether the moon is or has been the abode of living creatures. The movements of comets and meteors, and the discoveries recently made respecting their condition, have no interest except in relation to the position of these bodies in the economy of solar systems, or to the possible part which they may at one time have performed in building up worlds and suns. None save astronomers, and few only of these, care for researches into the star-depths, except in connection with the thought that every star is a sun, and therefore probably the light and fire of a system of worlds like those which circle around our own sun.

It is singular how variously this question of life in other worlds has been viewed at various stages of astronomical progress. From the time of Pythagoras, who first, so far as is known, propounded the general theory of the plurality of worlds, down to our own time when Brewster and Chalmers on the one hand, and Whewell on the other, have advocated rival theories probably to be both set aside for a theory at once intermediate to and more widely ranging

in time and space than either, the aspect of the subject has constantly varied, as new lights have been thrown upon it from different directions. It may be interesting briefly to consider what has been thought in the past on this strangely attractive question, and then to indicate the view towards which modern discoveries seem manifestly to point—a view not likely to undergo other change than that resulting from clearer vision and closer approach. In other words, I shall endeavour to show that the theory to which we are now led by all the known facts is correct in generals, though, as fresh knowledge is obtained, it may undergo modification in details. We now see the subject from the right point of view, though as science progresses we may come to see it more clearly and definedly.

When men believed the earth to be a flat surface above which the heavens were arched as a tent or canopy, they were not likely to entertain the belief in other worlds than ours. During the earlier ages of mankind ideas such as these prevailed. The earth had been fashioned into its present form and condition, the heavens had been spread over it, the sun, and moon, and stars, had been set in the heavens for its use and adornment, and there was no thought of any other world.

But while this was the general belief, there was already a school of philosophy where another doctrine had been taught. Pythagoras had adopted the belief of Apollonius Pergæus that the sun is the centre of the planetary paths, the earth one among the planets—a belief inseparable from the doctrine of the plurality of worlds. Much argument has been advanced to show that this belief never was adopted before the time of Copernicus, and unquestionably it must be admitted that the theory was not presented in the clear and simple form to which we have become accustomed. But it is not necessary to weigh the conflicting arguments for and against the opinion that Pythagoras and others regarded the earth as not the fixed centre of the universe. The certain fact that the doctrine of the plurality of worlds was entertained (I do not say adopted) by them, proves sufficiently that they cannot have believed the earth to be fixed and central. The idea of other worlds like our earth is manifestly inconsistent with the belief that the earth is the central body around which the whole universe revolves.

That this is so is well illustrated by the fate of the unfortunate Giordano Bruno. He was one of the first disciples of Copernicus, and, having accepted the doctrine that the earth travels round the sun as one among his family of planets, was led very naturally to the belief that the other planets are inhabited. He went farther, and maintained that as the earth is not the only inhabited world

in the solar system, so the sun is not the only centre of a system of inhabited worlds, but each star a sun like him, about which many planets revolve. This was one of the many heresies for which Bruno was burned at the stake. It is easy, also, to recognise in the doctrine of many worlds as the natural sequel of the Copernican theory, rather than in the features of this theory itself, the cause of the hostility with which theologians regarded it, until, finding it proved, they discovered that it is directly taught in the books which they interpret for us so variously. The Copernican theory was not rejected—nay, it was even countenanced—until this particular consequence of the theory was recognised. But within a few years from the persecution of Bruno, Galileo was imprisoned, and the last years of his life made miserable, because it had become clear that in setting the earth adrift from its position as centre of the universe, he and his brother Copernicans were sanctioning the belief in other worlds than ours. Again and again, in the attacks made by clericals and theologians upon the Copernican theory, this lamentable consequence was insisted upon. Unconscious that they were advancing the most damaging argument which could be conceived for the cause they had at heart, they maintained, honestly but unfortunately, that with the new theory came the manifest inference that our earth was not the only and by no means the most important world in the universe—a doctrine manifestly inconsistent (so they said) with the teachings of the Scriptures.

It was naturally only by a slow progression that men were able to advance into the domain spread before them by the Copernican theory, and to recognise the real minuteness of the earth both in space and time. They more quickly recognised the earth's insignificance in space, because the new theory absolutely forced this fact upon them. If the earth, whose globe they knew to be minute compared with her distance from the sun, is really circling around the sun in a mighty orbit many millions of miles in diameter, it follows of necessity that the fixed stars must lie so far away that even the span of the earth's orbit is reduced to nothing by comparison with the vast depths beyond which lie even the nearest of those suns. This was Tycho Brahe's famous and perfectly sound argument against the Copernican theory. 'The stars remain fixed in apparent position all the time, yet the Copernicans tell us that the earth from which we view the stars is circling once a year in an orbit many millions of miles in diameter; how is it that from so widely ranging a point of view we do not see widely different celestial landscapes? Who can believe that the stars are so remote that by comparison the span of the earth's path is a mere point?' Tycho's argument was of course

valid.¹ Of two things one. Either the earth does not travel round the sun, or the stars are much farther away than men had conceived possible in Tycho's time. His mistake lay in rejecting the correct conclusion because simply it made the visible universe seem many millions of times vaster than he had supposed. Yet the universe, even as thus enlarged, was but a point to the universe visible in our day, which in turn will dwindle to a point compared with the universe as men will see it a few centuries hence; while that or the utmost range of space over which men can ever extend their survey is doubtless as nothing to the real universe of occupied space.

Such has been the progression of our ideas as to the position of the earth in space. Forced by the discoveries of Copernicus to regard our earth as a mere point compared with the distances of the nearest fixed star, men gradually learned to recognise those distances which at first had seemed infinite as in their turn evanescent even by comparison with that mere point of space over which man is able by instrumental means to extend his survey. Though there has been a similar progression in men's ideas as to the earth's position in time, that progression has not been carried to a corresponding extent. Men have not been so bold in widening their conceptions of time as in widening their conceptions of space. It is here and thus that, in my judgment, the subject of life in other worlds has been hitherto incorrectly dealt with. Men have given up as utterly idle the idea that the existence of worlds is to be limited to the special domain of space to which our earth belongs; but they are content to retain the conception that the domain of time to which our earth's history belongs, this 'bank and shoal of time' on which the life of the earth is cast, is the period to which the existence of other worlds than ours should be referred.

This, which is to be noticed in nearly all our ordinary treatises on astronomy, appears as a characteristic peculiarity of works advocating the theory of the plurality of worlds. Brewster and Dick and Chalmers, all in fact who have taken that doctrine under their special protection, reason respecting other worlds as though, if they failed to prove that other orbs are inhabited *now*, or are at least *now* supporting life in some way or other, they failed of their purpose altogether. The idea does not seem to have occurred to them that there is room and verge enough in eternity

¹ Not 'of course' because Tycho used it, for, like other able students of science, he made mistakes from time to time. Thus he argued that the earth cannot rotate on her axis, because if she did bodies raised above her surface would be left behind—an argument which even the mechanical knowledge of his own time should have sufficed to invalidate, though it is still used from time to time by paradoxers of our own day.

of time not only for activity but for rest. They must have all the orbs of space busy at once in the one work which they seem able to conceive as the possible purpose of those bodies—the support of life. The argument from analogy which they had found effective in establishing the general theory of the plurality of worlds, is forgotten when its application to details would suggest that not *all* orbs are *at all times* either the abode of life or in some way subserving the purposes of life. We find, in all the forms of life with which we are acquainted, three characteristic periods—first, the time of preparation for the purposes of life; next, the time of fitness for those purposes; and thirdly, the time of decadence tending gradually to death. And we see among all objects which exist in numbers, examples of all these stages existing at the same time. In every race of living creatures there are the young as yet unfit for work, the workers, and those past work; in every forest there are saplings, seed-bearing trees, and trees long past the seed-bearing period. We know that planets, or rather, speaking more generally, the orbs which people space, pass through various stages of development, during some only of which they can reasonably be regarded as the abode of life or supporting life; yet the eager champion of the theory of many worlds will have them all in these life-bearing or life-supporting stages, none in any of the stages of preparation, none in any of the stages of decrepitude or death.

This has probably had its origin in no small degree from the disfavour with which in former years the theory of the growth and development of planets and systems of planets was regarded. Until the evidence became too strong to be resisted, the doctrine that our earth was once a baby world, with many millions of years to pass through before it could be the abode of life, was one which only the professed atheist (so said too many divines) could for a moment entertain; while the doctrine that not the earth alone, but the whole of the solar system, had developed from a condition utterly unlike that through which it is now passing, could have had its origin only in the suggestions of the Evil One. Both doctrines were pronounced to be so manifestly opposed to the teachings of Moses, and not only so, but so manifestly inconsistent with the belief in a Supreme Being, that—that further argument was unnecessary, and denunciation only was required. So confident were divines on these points, that it would not have been very wonderful if some few students of science had mistaken assertion for proof, and so concluded that the doctrines towards which science was unmistakably leading them really were inconsistent with what they had been taught to regard as the Word of God. Whether multiplied experiences taught

men of science to wait before thus deciding, or however matters fell out, it certainly befell before very long that the terrible doctrine of cosmical development was supported by such powerful evidence, astronomical and terrestrial, as to appear wholly irresistible. Then, not only was the doctrine accepted by divines; but shown to be manifestly implied in the sacred narrative of the formation of the earth and heavens, sun, and moon, and stars; while upon those unfortunate students of science who had not changed front in good time, and were found still arguing on the mistaken assumption that the development of our system was not accordant with that ancient narrative, freshly forged bolts were flung from the Olympus of orthodoxy.

So far as the other argument—from the inconsistency of the development theory with belief in a Supreme Being—was concerned, the student of science was independent of the interpretations which divines claim the sole right of assigning to the ancient books. Science has done so much more than divinity (which in fact has done nothing) to widen our conceptions of space and time, that she may justly claim full right to deal with any difficulties arising from such enlargement of our ideas. With the theological difficulty science would not care to deal at all, were she not urged to do so by the denunciations of divines; and when, so urged, she touches that difficulty, she is quickly told that the difficulty is insuperable, and not long after that it has no existence, and (on both accounts) that it should have been left alone. But with the difficulty arising from the widening of our ideas respecting space and time, science may claim good, almost sole, right to deal. The path to a solution of the problem is not difficult to find. At a first view, it does seem to those whose vision had been limited to a contracted field, that the wide domain of time and space in which processes of development are found to take place is the universe itself, that to deny the formation of our earth by a special creative act is to deny the existence of a Creator, that to regard the beginning of our earth as a process of development is to assert that development has been in operation from the beginning of all things. But when we recognise clearly that vastness and minuteness, prolonged and brief duration, are merely relative, we perceive that in considering our earth's history we have to deal only with small parts of space and brief periods of time, by comparison with all space and all time. Our earth is very large compared with a tree or an animal, but very small compared with the solar system, a mere point compared with the system of stars to which the sun belongs, and absolutely as nothing compared with the universe of space; and in like manner, while the periods of her growth and

development occupy periods very long-lasting compared with those required for the growth and development of a tree or an animal, they are doubtless but brief compared with the eras of the development of our solar system, a mere instant compared with the eras of the development of star-systems, and absolutely evanescent compared with eternity. We have no more reason for rejecting the belief in a Creator because our earth or the solar system is found to have developed to its present condition from an embryonic primordial state, than we have had ever since men first found that animals and trees are developed from the germ. The region of development is larger, the period of development lasts longer, but neither the one nor the other is infinite; and being finite, both one and the other are simply nothing by comparison with infinity. It is a startling thought, doubtless, that periods of time compared with which the life of a man, the existence of a nation, nay, the duration of the human race itself, sink into insignificance, should themselves in turn be dwarfed into nothingness by comparison with periods of a still higher order. But the thought is not more startling than that other thought which we have been compelled to admit—the thought that the earth on which we live, and the solar system to which it belongs, though each so vast that all known material objects are as nothing by comparison, are in turn as nothing compared with the depths of space separating us from even the nearest among the fixed stars. One thought, as I have said, we have been compelled to admit, the other has not as yet been absolutely forced upon us. Though men have long since given up the idea that the earth and heavens have endured but a few thousand years, it is still possible to believe that the birth of our solar system, whether by creative act or by the beginning of processes of development, belongs to the beginning of all time. But this view cannot be regarded as even probable. Although it has never been proved that any definite relation must subsist between time (occupied by events) and space (occupied by matter), the mind naturally accepts the belief that such a relation exists. As we find the universe enlarging under the survey of science, our conceptions of the duration of the universe enlarge also. When the earth was supposed to be the most important object in creation, men might reasonably assign to time itself (regarded as the interval between the beginning of the earth and the consummation of all things when the earth should perish) a moderate duration; but it is equally reasonable that, as the insignificance of the earth's domain in space is recognised, men should recognise also the presumable insignificance of the earth's existence in time.

In this respect, although we have nothing like the direct

evidence afforded by the measurement of space, we yet have evidence which can scarcely be called in question. We find in the structure of our earth the signs of its former condition. We see clearly that it was once intensely hot; and we know from experimental researches on the cooling of various earths that many millions of years must have been required by the earth in cooling down from its former igneous condition. We may doubt whether Bischoff's researches can be relied upon in details, and so be unwilling to assign with him a period of 350 millions of years to a single stage of the process of cooling. But that the entire process lasted tens of millions and probably hundreds of millions of years cannot be doubted. Recognising such enormous periods as these in the development of one of the smallest fruits of the great solar tree of life, we cannot but admit at least the reasonableness of believing that the larger fruits (Jupiter, for instance, with 340 times as much matter, and Saturn with 100 times) must require periods still vaster, probably many times larger. Indeed, science shows not only that this view is reasonable, but that no other view is possible. For the mighty root of the tree of life, the great orb of the sun, containing 340 *thousand* times as much matter as the earth, yet mightier periods would be needed. The growth and development of these, the parts of the great system, must of necessity require much shorter time-intervals than the growth and development of the system regarded as a whole. The enormous period when the germs only of the sun and planets existed as yet, when the chaotic substance of the system had not yet blossomed into worlds, the mighty period which is to follow the death of the last surviving member of the system, when the whole scheme will remain as the dead trunk of a tree remains after the last leaf has fallen, after the last movement of sap within the trunk—these periods must be infinite compared with those which measure the duration of even the mightiest separate members of the system.

But all this has been left unnoticed by those who have argued in support of the Brewsterian doctrine of a plurality of worlds. They argue as if it had never been shown that every member of the solar system, as of all other such systems in space, has to pass through an enormously long period of preparation before becoming fit to be the abode of life, and that after being fit for life, for a period very long to our conceptions, but by comparison with the other exceedingly short, it must for countless ages remain as an extinct world. Or else they reason as though it had been proved that the relatively short life-bearing periods in the existence of the several planets must of necessity synchronise, instead of all the probabilities lying overwhelmingly the other way.

While this has been (in my judgment) a defect in what may be called the Brewsterian theory of other worlds, a defect not altogether dissimilar has characterised the opposite or Whewellite theory. Very useful service was rendered to astronomy by Whewell's treatise upon, or rather against, the plurality of worlds, calling attention as it did to the utter feebleness of the arguments on which men had been content to accept the belief that other planets and other systems are inhabited. But some among the most powerfully urged arguments against that belief tacitly relied on the assumption of a similarity of general condition among the members of the solar system. For instance, the small mean density of Jupiter and Saturn had, on the Brewsterian theory, been explained as probably due to vast hollow spaces in those planets' interiors—an explanation which (if it could be admitted) would leave us free to believe that Jupiter and Saturn may be made of the same materials as our own earth. With this was pleasantly intermixed the conception that the inhabitant of these planets may have his 'home in subterranean cities warmed by central fires, or in crystal caves cooled by ocean tides, or may float with the Nereids upon the deep, or mount upon wings as eagles, or rise upon the pinions of the dove, that he may flee away and be at rest,' with much more in the same fanciful tone. We now know that there can be no hollow more than a few miles below the crust of a planet, simply because, under the enormous pressures which would exist, the most solid matter would be perfectly plastic. But while Whewell's general objection to the theory that Jupiter or Saturn is in the same condition as our earth thus acquires new force, the particular explanation which he gave of the planet's small density is open to precisely the same general objection. For he assumes that, because the planet's mean density is little greater than that of water, the planet is probably a world of water and ice with a cindery nucleus, or in fact just such a world as would be formed if a sufficient quantity of water in the same condition as the water of our seas were placed at Jupiter's greater distance from the sun, around a nucleus of earthy or cindery matter large enough to make the density of the entire planet thus formed equal to that of Jupiter, or about one-third greater than the density of water. In this argument there are in reality two assumptions, of precisely the same nature as those which Whewell set himself to combat. It is first assumed that some material existing on a large scale in our earth, and nearly of the same density as Jupiter, must constitute the chief bulk of that planet, and secondly that the temperature of Jupiter's globe must be that which a globe of such material would have if placed where

Jupiter is. The possibility that Jupiter may be in an entirely different stage of planetary life—or, in other words, that the youth, middle life, and old age of that planet may belong to quite different eras from the corresponding periods of our earth's life—is entirely overlooked. Rather, indeed, it may be said that the extreme probability of this, on any hypothesis respecting the origin of the solar system, and its absolute certainty on the hypothesis of the development of that system, are entirely overlooked.

A fair illustration of the erroneous nature of the arguments which have been used, not only in advocating rival theories respecting the plurality of worlds, but also in dealing with subordinate points, may be presented as follows:

Imagine a wide extent of country covered with scattered trees of various size, with plants and shrubs, flowers and herbs, down to the minutest known. Let us suppose a race of tiny creatures to subsist on one of the fruits of a tree of moderate size, their existence as a race depending entirely on the existence of the fruit on which they subsist, while the existence of the individuals of their race lasts but for a few minutes. Furthermore, let there be no regular fruit season either on their tree or in their region of vegetable life, but fruits forming, growing, and decaying all the time.

Let us next conceive these creatures to be possessed of a power of reasoning respecting themselves, their fruit world, the tree on which it hangs, and to some degree even respecting such other trees, plants, flowers, and so forth, as the limited range of their vision might be supposed to include. It would be a natural thought with them, when first they began to exercise this power of reasoning, that their fruit home was the most important object in existence, and themselves the chief and noblest of living beings. It would also be very natural that they should suppose the formation of their world to correspond with the beginning of time, and the formation of their race to have followed the formation of their world by but a few seconds. They would conclude that a Supreme Being had fashioned their world and themselves by special creative acts, and that what they saw outside their fruit world had been also specially created, doubtless to subserve their wants.

Let us now imagine that gradually, by becoming more closely observant than they had been, by combining together to make more complete observations, and above all by preserving the records of observations made by successive generations, these creatures began to obtain clearer ideas respecting their world and the surrounding regions of space. They would find evidence that the fruit on which they lived had not been formed precisely as they knew it, but had undergone processes of development. The

distressing discovery would be made that this development could not possibly have taken place in a few seconds, but must have required many hours, nay, even several of those enormous periods called by us days.

This, however, would only be the beginning of their troubles. Gradually the more advanced thinkers and the closest observers would perceive that not only had their world undergone processes of development, but that its entire mass had been formed by such processes—that in fact it had not been created at all, in the sense in which they had understood the word, but had *grown*. This would be very dreadful to these creatures, because they would not readily be able to dispossess their minds of the notion that they were the most important beings in the universe, their domain of space coextensive with the universe, the duration of their world coextensive with time. But passing over the difficulties thus arising, and the persecution and abuse to which those would be subjected who maintained the dangerous doctrine that their fruit home had been developed not created, let us consider how these creatures would regard the question of other worlds than their own. At first they would naturally be unwilling to admit the possibility that other worlds as important as their own could exist. But if after a time they found reason to believe that their world was only one of several belonging to a certain tree system, the idea would occur to them, and would gradually come to be regarded as something more than probable, that those other fruit worlds, like their own, might be the abode of living creatures. And probably at first, while as yet the development of their own world was little understood, they would conceive the notion that all the fruits, large or small, upon their tree system were in the same condition as their own, and either inhabited by similar races or at least in the same full vigour of life-bearing existence. But so soon as they recognised the law of development of their own world, and the relation between such development and their own requirements, they would form a different opinion, if they found that only during certain stages of their world's existence life could exist upon it. If, for instance, they perceived that their fruit world must once have been so bitter and harsh in texture that no creatures in the least degree like themselves could have lived upon it, and that it was passing slowly but surely through processes by which it would become one day dry and shrivelled and unable to support living creatures, they would be apt, if their reasoning powers were fairly developed, to enquire whether other fruits which they saw around them on their tree system were either in the former or in the latter condition, and if they found reason to believe certain fruits were in one

or other of these stages, they would regard such fruits as not yet the abode of life or as past the life-supporting era. It seems probable even that another idea would suggest itself to some among their bolder thinkers. Recognising in their own world in several instances what to their ideas resembled absolute waste of material or of force, it might appear to them quite possible that some, perhaps even a large proportion, of the fruits upon their tree were not only not supporting life at the particular epoch of observation, but never had supported life and never would—that, through some cause or other, life would never appear upon such fruits even when they were excellently fitted for the support of life. They might even conceive that some among the fruits of their tree had failed or would fail to come to the full perfection of fruit life.

Looking beyond their own tree—that is, the tree to which their own fruit world belonged—they would perceive other trees; though their visual powers might not enable them to know whether such trees bore fruit, whether they were in other respects like their own, whether those which seemed larger or smaller were really so, or owed their apparent largeness to nearness, or their apparent smallness to great distance. They would be apt perhaps to generalise a little too daringly respecting these remote tree-systems, concluding too confidently that a shrub or a flower was a tree-system like their own, or that a great tree, every branch of which was far larger than their entire tree-system, belonged to the same order and bore similar fruit. They might mistake also in forgetting the probable fact that as every fruit in their own tree-system had its own period of life, very brief compared with the entire existence of the fruit, so every tree might have its own fruit-bearing season. Thus, contemplating a tree which they supposed to be like their own in its nature, they might say, ‘Yonder is a tree-system crowded with fruits, each the abode of many myriads of creatures like ourselves,’ whereas in reality the tree might be utterly unlike their own, might not yet have reached or might long since have passed the fruit-bearing stage, might when in that stage bear fruit utterly unlike any they could even imagine, and each such fruit during its brief life-bearing condition might be inhabited by living beings utterly unlike any creatures they could conceive.

Yet again, we can very well imagine that the inhabitants of our fruit world, though they might daringly overleap the narrow limits of space and time within which their actual life or the life of their race was cast, though they might learn to recognise the development of their own world and of others like it, even from

the very blossom, would be utterly unable to conceive the possibility that the tree itself to which their world belonged had developed by slow processes of growth from a time when it was less even than their own relatively minute home.

Still less would it seem credible to them, or even conceivable, that the whole forest region to which they belonged, containing many orders of trees differing altogether from their own tree-system, besides plants and shrubs, and flowers and herbs (forms of vegetation of whose use they could form no just conception whatever), had itself grown; that once the entire forest domain had been under vast masses of water—the substance which occasionally visited their world in the form of small drops; that such changes were but minute local phenomena of a world infinitely higher in order than their own; that that world in turn was but one of the least of the worlds forming a yet higher system; and so on *ad infinitum*. Such ideas would seem to them not merely inconceivable, but many degrees beyond the widest conceptions of space and time which they could regard as admissible.

Our position differs only in degree, not in kind, from that of these imagined creatures, and the reasoning which we perceive (though they could not) to be just for such creatures is just for us also. It was perfectly natural that before men recognised the evidences of development in the structure of our earth they should regard the earth and all things upon the earth and visible from the earth as formed by special creative acts precisely as we see them now. But so soon as they perceived that the earth is undergoing processes of development and has undergone such processes in the past, it was reasonable, though at first painful, to conclude that on this point they had been mistaken. Yet as we recognise the absurdity of the supposition that, because fruits and trees grow and were not made in a single instant as we know them, therefore there is no Supreme Being, so may we justly reject as absurd the same argument, enlarged in scale, employed to induce the conclusion that because planets and solar systems have been developed to their present condition, and were not created in their present form, therefore there is no Creator, no God. I do not know that the argument ever has been used in this form; but it has been used to show that those who believe in the development of worlds and systems must of necessity be atheists, an even more mischievous conclusion than the other; for none who had not examined the subject would be likely to adopt the former conclusion, but many might be willing to believe that a number of their fellow-men hold obnoxious tenets, without enquiring closely or at all into the reasoning on which the assertion had been based.

But it is more important to notice how our views respecting other worlds should be affected by those circumstances in the evidence *we* have, which correspond with the features of the evidence on which the imagined inhabitants of the fruit world would form their opinion. It was natural that when men first began to reason about themselves and their home they should reject the idea of other worlds like ours, and perhaps it was equally natural that when first the idea was entertained that the planets may be worlds like ours, men should conceive that all those worlds are in the same condition as ours. But it would be, or rather it *is*, as unreasonable for men to maintain such an opinion now, when the laws of planetary development are understood, when the various dimensions of the planets are known, and when the shortness of the life-supporting period of a planet's existence compared with the entire duration of the planet has been clearly recognised, as it would be for the imagined inhabitants of a small fruit on a tree to suppose that all the other fruits on the tree, though some manifestly far less advanced in development and others far more advanced than their own, were the abode of the same forms of life, though these forms were seen to require those conditions, and no other, corresponding to the stage of development through which their own world was passing.

Viewing the universe of suns and worlds in the manner here suggested, we should adopt a theory of other worlds which would hold a position intermediate between the Brewsterian and the Whewellite theories. (It is not on this account that I advocate it, let me remark in passing, but simply because it accords with the evidence, which is not the case with the others.) Rejecting on the one hand the theory of the plurality of worlds in the sense implying that all existent worlds are inhabited, and on the other hand the theory of but one world, we should accept a theory which might be entitled the Paucity of Worlds, only that relative not absolute paucity must be understood. It is absolutely certain that this theory is the correct one, if we admit two postulates, neither of which can be reasonably questioned—viz., first, that the life-bearing era of any world is short compared with the entire duration of that world; and secondly, that there can have been no cause which set all the worlds in existence, not simultaneously, which would be amazing enough, but (which would be infinitely more surprising) in such a way that after passing each through its time of preparation, longer for the large worlds and shorter for the small worlds, they all reached at the same time the life-bearing era. But quite apart from this antecedent probability, amounting as it does to absolute certainty if these two highly probable pos-

tulates are admitted, we have the actual evidence of the planets we can examine—that evidence proving incontestably, as I have shown elsewhere, that such planets as Jupiter and Saturn are still in the state of preparation, still so intensely hot that no form of life could possibly exist upon them, and that such bodies as our moon have long since passed the life-bearing stage, and are to all intents and purposes defunct.

But may we not go further? Recognising in our own world, in many instances, what to our ideas resembles waste—waste seeds, waste lives, waste races, waste regions, waste forces—recognising superfluity and superabundance in all the processes and in all the works of nature, should it not appear at least possible that some, perhaps even a large proportion, of the worlds in the multitudinous systems peopling space, are not only not now supporting life, but never have supported life and never will? Does this idea differ in kind, however largely to our feeble conceptions it may seem to differ in degree, from the idea of the imagined creatures on a fruit, that some or even many fruits excellently fitted for the support of life might not subserve that purpose? And as those creatures might conceive (as we *know*) that some fruits, even many, failed to come to the full perfection of fruit life, may not we without irreverence conceive (as higher beings than ourselves may *know*) that a planet or a sun may fail in the making? We cannot say that in such a case there would be a waste or loss of material, though we may be unable to conceive how the lost sun or planet could be utilised. Our imagined insect reasoners would be unable to imagine that fruits plucked from their tree-system were otherwise than wasted, for they would conceive that their idea of the purpose of fruits was the only true one; yet they would be altogether mistaken, as we may be in supposing the main purpose of planetary existence is the support of life.

In like manner, when we pass in imagination beyond the limits of our own system, we may learn a useful lesson from the imagined creatures' reasoning about other tree-systems than that to which their world belonged. Astronomers have been apt to generalise too daringly respecting remote stars and star-systems, as though our solar system were a true picture of all solar systems, the system of stars to which our sun belongs a true picture of all star-systems. They have been apt to forget that, as every world in our own system has its period of life, short by comparison with the entire duration of the world, so each solar system, each system of such systems, may have its own life-bearing season, infinitely long according to our conceptions, but very short indeed compared with the entire duration of which the life-bearing season would be only a single era.

Lastly, though men may daringly overleap the limits of time and space within which their lives are cast, though they may learn to recognise the development of their own world and of others like it even from the blossom of nebulousity, they seem unable to rise to the conception that the mighty tree which during remote æons bore those nebulous blossoms sprang itself from cosmical germs. We are unable to conceive the nature of such germs; the processes of development affecting them belong to other orders than any processes we know of, and required periods compared with which the inconceivable, nay, the inexpressible periods required for the development of the parts of our universe, are as mere instants. Yet have we every reason which analogy can afford to believe that even the development of a whole universe such as ours should be regarded as but a minute local phenomenon of a universe infinitely higher in order, that universe in turn but a single member of a system of such universes, and so on, even *ad infinitum*. To reject the belief that this is possible is to share the folly of beings such as we have conceived regarding their tiny world as a fit centre whence to measure the universe, while yet, from such a stand-point, this little earth on which we live would be many degrees beyond the limits where for them the inconceivable would begin. To reject the belief that this is not only possible, but real, is to regard the few short steps by which man has advanced towards the unknown as a measurable approach towards limits of space, towards the beginning and the end of all things. Until it can be shown that space is bounded by limits beyond which neither matter nor void exists, that time had a beginning before which it was not and tends to an end after which it will exist no more, we may confidently accept the belief that the history of our earth is as evanescent in time as the earth itself is evanescent in space, and that nothing we can possibly learn about our earth, or about the system it belongs to, or about systems of such systems, can either prove or disprove aught respecting the scheme and mode of government of the universe itself. It is true now as it was in days of yore, and it will remain true as long as the earth and those who dwell on it endure, that what men know is nothing, the unknown infinite.

GOOD STORIES OF MAN AND OTHER ANIMALS.

BY CHARLES READE.

9. *Doubles.*

PART II.

NEXT morning, the President Lescot was released on bail, after a short hearing, in which he declared loudly that he had a perfect right to expose a courtesan, whose lover he was, and who had the effrontery to say publicly she did not know him. 'That right,' said he, 'I am prepared to maintain, in any tribunal.'

He held the same language in Society; and on the whole, the world took his part in the matter.

Supposing the allegation to be false, La Molière had her proper remedy. She had only to proceed against Lescot, for violence, and slander.

She hesitated: and this confirmed the public opinion. It spread to the theatrical audiences, and the favourite actress began to be received with sneers, and chuckles, or ominous silence.

She was alarmed, and went to an old actress called Châteauneuf, who had a long head, and had often advised her in matters of intrigue.

La Châteauneuf said the case was plain. She should take proceedings.

'Nay, but I dare not,' said La Molière. 'They will search into my whole life.'

The older fox laughed; but said, 'Never mind that, child. You are innocent, for once; that is an accident you must put to profit; and so throw a doubt on your real indiscretions. Commence proceedings at once. You are ruined, if you submit.'

The young fox listened to the old fox, with the respect due to our seniors, and laid a criminal information against Lescot.

He stood firm as a rock, persisted in his statements, and brought a very ugly witness, the goldsmith from the Quai des Orfèvres. This trader swore to La Molière's necklace, as one he had sold; and to herself as the lady who was with Lescot when he sold it.

This evidence was fatal to the accuser, both in the court and with the public. But, when Lescot went after Madame Ledoux, to complete his defence, she was not to be found. He let this out,

and that he had relied on her. The accuser's agent then smelt a rat, and set the police to find Ledoux.

Meantime, La Molière was the butt of Paris.

But the police succeeded in finding Ledoux, and her examination put a new face on the matter. Ledoux confessed that Monsieur Lescot, being madly enamoured of Mademoiselle Molière, had asked her assistance; that she, not caring to meddle with an intrigue of that kind, had introduced to him a young lady, who perfectly resembled Mademoiselle Molière. This young lady, she said, had for maiden name Marie Simonnet, but called herself the widow of a Monsieur Harvè de la Tourelle, a gentleman of Brittany.

On this hint, the accuser searched for the young lady in question. They soon found traces of her, and that she was called, by her friends, 'La Tourelle.'

La Tourelle had disappeared. 'And never will appear, being a phantom,' said Lescot: 'was ever so audacious a figment? as if one woman could have the face, the figure, the manners, the cough, and the necklace, of another.'

Well, the officers of justice caught La Tourelle in the suburbs of Paris, and were astonished at the resemblance.

She was confronted with Mademoiselle Molière, in the judge's room, in presence of Ledoux and the President Lescot.

The ladies faced each other like two young stags, ready to butt each other. The injured Molière folded her arms grandly, and cocked her nose high, and would fain have looked the other down as a criminal. But the other jade saw she was the younger of the two, and wore a demure air of defiant complacency.

But, setting aside fleeting expression, they were literally one in stature, form, and feature. If each had looked into a mirror, she would have seen the hussy that now faced her.

Amazement painted itself on every face; most of all on Lescot's.

Ledoux persisted in her confession; and both she and La Tourelle were imprisoned, to await the trial.

Lescot now found himself in the wrong box; and it became very important to him that the trial should never come off. With this view, he exerted all his influence to bail La Tourelle, meaning, no doubt, to forfeit his recognizances, and send her out of the country. But the judges would accept no bail; and the day of trial was fixed.

Then Lescot bribed the gaoler; and he showed La Tourelle how to make her escape in a very ingenious way, that had never



La Molière.

THE DOUBLES CONFRONTED.

La Tourelle.

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occurred to the lady, whose genius, like that of many other ladies, was mainly confined to matters of love and intrigue.

Lescot sent her away into the depths of Dauphinè, and her absence suspended that trial.

But La Molière's blood was up, and she appealed personally to men in power, and used all her charms, and all her arts.

The result was a new process, under which not one of those who had offended her escaped.

The President Lescot was condemned to stand at the bar, and read a paper in presence of La Molière, and four witnesses, to be by her chosen :

‘I, François Lescot, admit and declare that I, by recklessness and mistake, have used violence against Mademoiselle Molière, here present, and slandered her foully, but without malice of heart, having taken her for another person.’

He was also fined two hundred francs.

By the same judgment, the women Ledoux and La Tourelle had to pay a fine of twenty francs each to the King, one hundred francs each to La Molière, and to be whipped naked before the gate of the Châtelet, and also before the house of Mademoiselle Molière.

Lescot made his *amende honorable*, and paid his fine. Ledoux paid her fine, and was whipped before the Châtelet, and before La Molière's windows: but La Tourelle was more fortunate. Nature has her freaks; she profited by one of them. Lescot, who had now compared, in many ways, the hussy he adored, with the jade who had personated her, was as much enamoured as ever, if not more: but, by Jupiter, it was not the actress, but her double he was now in love with. He joined her in Dauphinè, and rewarded her with a life-long attachment, which she is believed to have shared.

La Molière, as her foxy adviser had prophesied, was wonderfully re-established in character. Men said, ‘And, no doubt, she was always calumniated.’ The judgment of the Châtelet operated as a certificate of her good morals.

The goldsmith's evidence is accounted for thus. There were no jewels to the necklace. A number of gold necklaces had been made on one pattern. The goldsmith swore to La Molière's, because he saw the lady as he thought.

While the affair was yet warm, the tragi-comedy of Thomas Corneille, called ‘*L'Inconnu*,’ was produced. La Molière was the

Countess, and, in the play, a gipsy looked at her hand, and spoke these lines:—

Cette ligne, qui croisse avec celle de vie,
 Marque pour votre gloire un moment très fatal;
 Sur des traits ressemblants on en parlera mal,
 Et vous aurez une copie.
 N'en prenez pas trop de chagrin:
 Si votre gaillarde figure
 Contre vous, quelque temps, cause un fâcheux murmure,
 Un *tour de ville* y mettra fin,
 Et vous rirez de l'aventure.

The public, always quick to fit fiction to reality, seized on these verses at once, and applied them to the recent event, and showed their sympathy with the actress, by storms of applause.

The favourite, her popularity embellished by a *coup de maître*, now married her actor—and continued her gallantries.

But Célimène, at bottom, lacked neither judgment nor heart. Hence I am able to conclude with a good and touching trait. On the anniversary of Mclière's death, which befell in winter, she always collected the poor round his grave, and there bestowed charity on them, and lighted great fires, to warm them, as they ate the food she bestowed without stint upon them, at that great master's tomb.

Poor Célimène. Adieu!

A Family Party in the Piazza of St. Peter.

BY T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER VII.

NINETTA'S STORY.

LUCIA had called the attention of the little party to the glimpse that was obtainable from the spot where they stood, of the component parts of the procession as they defiled into order; when at the same moment a great hush fell on all the crowd. The little circumstances that had threatened to disturb the good understanding between Ninetta and her friends the Melittas were forgotten in the interest of the moment.

But it was very little that could be seen thus from the end of the colonnade. Patience was yet needed before a really good view of the sight in all its glory could be obtained; but that patience would be rewarded as soon as the procession should reach the end of the semicircular colonnade on its way to the great tent in the piazza Rusticucci. It would then pass immediately before the little knot of our friends; and they would again see, at least, the grand sight of all—the Pontiff borne aloft above the heads of the crowd—as he returned by the opposite colonnade to the church. And our friends, like all the rest of that crowd of Romans, were perfectly well disposed to be patient. But patience need not exclude the dear delight of gossip—of a *chiaccheria*, as an Italian says—literally a chatter; and as soon as the momentary impression produced by the first appearance of the head of the procession had somewhat worn off, the tongues began to wag again; and again the vast space of the piazza was filled with the immense murmur of thousands of voices.

Lucia feared that her uncle might again recur to his disgust at the behaviour of the young French officer, and his disapproval of such a *damo* for a Roman girl in the position of Ninetta. But fortunately he was too much interested in the present moment, and as soon as the roar of voices around him made him aware that he too might talk without any offence against the proprieties of time and place, he began to cross-question Ninetta's experience as to the particulars of the sight they were awaiting. And the gratification of finding herself in the position of an authority readily effaced from the young girl's mind any recollection of the previous

offence. In fact, it was inevitable that Ninetta and Lucia's uncle should talk together, if they were not to remain silent, which would have been a thing utterly impossible to Italians so circumstanced. For Lucia and Carlo Carena soon fell into a resumption of their *tête-à-tête* respecting his visit to Signor Chianquinsi's studio on the following morning, and what might be expected to result therefrom, and what he should say to M. Jules Morel on giving him notice of his intention to quit his studio, and what he should say to 'Signor Chianquinsi,' as they both called Mr. Jenkins, with the perfect assurance of pronouncing his name in the most satisfactory manner. And Lucia had a great deal to tell Carlo of the peculiarities of that gentleman, who, if all she said were true, must indeed have been 'an original' of the first water. Then Nanni Melitta and Clelia were on their part wholly engrossed by each other. The enjoyment of the festival to them was the opportunity it gave them of being so. Though it is probable that the satisfaction of standing side by side was found by both of them to be a sufficient amusement and gratification, and that the tongue contributed less to the pleasure of the occasion than in the case of any other two persons in the piazza, Clelia would from time to time try to stir Nanni up a little by asking questions, to which he would reply by a 'Who knows?' But none the less was their intercourse very delightful to both of them, and so engrossing as to prevent either of them from having eyes or ears for any one else. So that Tancredi Melitta and Ninetta were necessarily forced into a *tête-à-tête*.

'Have you and Lucia been long acquainted, *figliuola mia*?' asked Tancredi, by way of saying something.

'About four years, Signor Tancredi. I was quite young then,' returned Ninetta, with a little sigh, as over her departed youth.

'Quite young, eh? Why, what do you call yourself now, I should like to know?' rejoined Signor Melitta with a rather grim smile. He was rather a grim man, was Tancredi Melitta the *buttero*, with yellow checks, blue-black stubble beard, and deep-set eyes.

'Now I am seventeen, but I was only thirteen then,' said Ninetta, with an air of having triumphantly maintained her position.

'And how did you and Lucia come to make friends?' asked the *buttero* again, with very languid curiosity.

'Oh, that was because Lucia is so good. I don't know what would have become of me if it had not been for Lucia. I used to live with a marble collector in those days,' replied Ninetta, with her little sigh again.

‘And what sort of a trade is that?’ asked Tancredi, whose country birth and breeding had not given him the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the minutiae of Roman life.

‘Oh, it is not a bad trade. We used to go round to the sculptors’ studios and buy the chips and dust to sell them to the marble cement makers, who grind them down for cement.’

‘We? That was you and your master, I suppose; wasn’t he good to you?’ asked Tancredi, still to make talk, rather than from feeling any very lively interest in the subject of the conversation.

‘He! It was an old woman. They are mostly women who have that business in their hands,’ returned Ninetta.

‘Oh, an old woman! But how was it that you and Lucia fell in with each other?’ again asked the *buttero*, veering back to the only point in the matter that had any interest, and that but a very slight one, for him.

‘Why, you see, Signor Tancredi, I used to go to the studios and find where there were any chips or dust to be got rid of; and so one day, in the morning early, there was Lucia just getting ready to stand for a model to the artist, and the head workman was telling me to go away, and come again at the end of the week, and I began to cry—for you see, Signor Tancredi, I had had one beating already that morning for not having found any chips—and so Lucia asked me what was the matter, and she persuaded the workman to let me—that is to say, my mistress—have the chips that day; and then we agreed, Lucia and I, to meet in the evening: and we went and sat down on the great steps in the Piazza di Spagna; and—ever since that we have been friends.’

‘And do you still follow the trade of collecting marble?’ asked Tancredi, thinking more of the nature of the calling he then heard of for the first time, than of Ninetta’s interest in the matter.

‘Oh, no! Thanks to Lucia, I am in a much better way now. She got a friend of hers to teach me a little of the pearl-making, and then she got me a place in one of the great shops; and I have been there ever since.’

‘Oh! making pearls, eh?’ said Tancredi.

‘Yes; but they ain’t real pearls, you know. Roman pearls we call them—made to imitate the real ones, you know.’

‘And I suppose you have got a holiday from the shop for to day—such a festa as this—*diamine!*’¹ said the *buttero*.

‘A longer holiday than that, worse luck,’ returned Ninetta; ‘a

¹ An almost untranslatable expletive. Perhaps some such phrase as ‘I should think so,’ ‘I should hope so,’ comes as near the mark as may be.

holiday that lasts from May till October. We can't work at the pearl-making in the hot weather. That is the worst of it.'

'Ay, that makes but a poor trade of it. And what do you get while you are at work?' said the *buttero*.

'Two francs a day, and a dinner; not so bad, if it only lasted all the year round,' returned poor little Ninetta, who looked very much as if it would have been considerably better for her if at least the dinner had been provided all the year round instead of only during half of it.

'And how do you make out to live from May to October, *figliuola mia*?' said the *buttero*, looking at her compassionately.

'Oh! I manage to save a little during the winter; and then I get a little now and then by selling flowers in the *caffès*; and then, if the worst comes to the worst, Lucia helps me a little. Ah, Lucia, she is as good as a saint, Lucia is. She would give me half her own crust any day, and I would give my life for her, if she wanted it, that I would!' said Ninetta, clasping her hands and looking up to heaven very much like one of those saints she said her friend resembled.

'And how came it to pass,' began the *buttero*, 'who was about to question the girl about the grand *damo* she had seemed so fond of, but checked himself, remembering that the topic had already led to some little unpleasantness. 'Ah, give your life for her, you say. But it is none so easy, *figliuola mia*, to give up your life when it comes close to the doing of it. Let's hope Lucia won't need it,' he added with a grim chuckle that was meant to label his words as a joke.

'Ah well, that depends on what your life is. I *would have* given my life for Lucia, though. Maybe——' and Ninetta broke off abruptly, busy in pursuing in the secret recesses of her own heart the consideration of the question, whether she would in truth *now* be equally ready to sacrifice her life for her friend; and if not, why not?

'Couldn't your father do any better for you than to let you be beat by an old woman that lived by finding marble chippings?' said Tancredi, returning to the subject in the absence of any other topic of conversation wherewith to beguile the time till the appearance of the procession at the bottom of the colonnade.

'I don't know that I ever had any father, or mother either,' replied Ninetta, quite as if she were referring herself to a by no means uncommon or unknown category of human beings. 'The furthest back I can remember, I used to live with an old, old man and his wife, who always told me that I had no father or mother. I think he was a sexton of some church, and his wife used to sweep and clean the church. They both died pretty nearly at the same time,

when I was quite a little thing; and then I had no place to go to, and nothing in all the world but the clothes I had on me, and a rosary of wooden beads with a little bone crucifix hanging to it which I had always worn round my neck. I don't suppose it was worth anything, or they would not have let me keep it,' said Ninetta reflectively.

'And where do you live now?' added the *buttero*, after a short pause.

'With Siora Marta, a widow woman in the Via de Serpenti; she works at the pearl-making, and so does her daughter. Lucia found the place for me. Siora Marta was an acquaintance of hers. It is a very good *quartiere*, on the fourth floor you know; and I have got a little room all to myself,' said Ninetta.

All the time the latter part of this dialogue had been going on the *buttero* had unconsciously retained in his hand Ninetta's rosary with the little crucifix attached to it, dangling it to and fro without thinking of it. But just then the sound of the chanting which had before reached them, mingled with the ringing of bells, and the occasional boom of the cannon from St. Angelo as a far-off indistinct murmur, became suddenly louder and clearer, as the head of the procession rounded the curve of the semicircular colonnade, and in the next minute the advanced guard of soldiers began to defile in front of the little party standing at the foot of the last pier of it. Of course all conversations, even those of a much more interesting nature than that between the *buttero* and Ninetta, were suddenly broken off, and everybody faced about towards the line of the procession, and stood on tiptoe, and lived only in their eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

'HE WON'T COME NOW!'

IN the next minute the huge cross which opens the purely ecclesiastical part of the procession hove in sight, advancing very slowly, and then the children and young men of the papal schools and hospitals. But this was not the interesting, or indeed, it must be owned, a very edifying part of the show. The children walked two and two, either chattering or quarrelling with each other. One mischievous urchin would try to hold his torch so as to cause the wax to fall on the dress of the boy who preceded him. Another would push against his yoke-fellow, like an ill-broken coach-horse leaning on the pole. This would produce retaliating elbow-nudges in the ribs from the aggrieved party. Another, while pretending, with a ludicrous attempt at assuming a devout bearing, to be wholly engrossed by the proper business of the

occasion, would be silly endeavouring to put his feet on the toes of his neighbour; and a fourth, from sheer vacancy and inattention, would let his candle fall into an almost horizontal position, dropping the wax all about, and rapidly destroying the torch. Every now and then some of the various attendants whose business it was to see to the decorous ordering of the procession, would observe and reprove these offenders. But it was remarkable that they did so in the most perfunctory and plainly inefficacious manner, appearing to be neither shocked, scandalised, nor surprised in any way, at such behaviour. Nor did any of such improprieties appear to excite the smallest degree of disapprobation, or even to attract the attention, of any person in the crowd.

But then succeeded the long train of all the different bodies of friars, and with them began the interest of the sight. It was noticeable and curious that these mendicant friars evidently stood higher in the estimation of the crowd, and were objects of greater interest to them, than the members of the non-mendicant monastic bodies, which followed them. As far as regards any real title to respect, there can be no doubt that the non-mendicant orders possess more of it than the mendicants. They are less grossly ignorant, less filthily dirty, less in the habit of mischievously meddling with lay affairs. Perhaps, however, all these differences are the very causes which operate to produce the greater popularity of the bare-footed Franciscan or Domenican. The Franciscan, however, beats his rival the Domenican in the affections of the populace. It is the son of St. Francis, ignorant even of matters ecclesiastic or theologic to a perfectly incredible degree, similar in manners, in thoughts, and to a great degree in habits, to the lowest strata of the population, often at war in his heart with constituted civil authority, and even with all constituted ecclesiastical superiors, save those of his own convent and the Supreme Pontiff—it is this democrat of the Church that can very often most powerfully influence the classes at the broad base of the social pyramid.

Many of the poorest people among the crowd, women especially, knelt as the monastic orders moved past them, rising to their feet again when the different bodies of the secular clergy defiled from under the colonnade.

But it was not till the great dignitaries of the Church came in view that the part of the show for the sake of which the crowd had really come there, began. Then indeed the procession became 'as good as a play.' There was no symptom among the crowd of any feeling of reverence, or of liking, or the reverse, for these 'purple princes' of Christendom. They were regarded

just as so many splendidly got-up theatrical figures might have been stared at. The prevailing sentiment was evidently one of good humour, the result of being treated to a diversion for which there was nothing to be paid.

But it was not till the great chief actor in the play hove in sight that the interest was at its climax. At the first glimpse of the huge machine borne aloft on men's shoulders, on which the Pontiff seemed to kneel in an attitude of the most devout and earnest prayer, the whole of the crowd in the immediate vicinity of the procession sunk on their knees. The movement was so sudden and so general, that the effect produced was a singular one. It was as if some irresistible simoom had passed over the mass of human beings and prostrated them all. This lasted, however, but for a very few minutes. The gorgeous pageant passed on, the crowd breathed again, rose to a standing position, and forthwith returned to their chattering.

The time which had to be passed before the huge procession had reached the other side of the piazza on its return to the church would have appeared intolerably long to anyone of transalpine race. But the Roman crowd passed the hours in perfect and manifest contentment. They had nothing to do, no demand on them for any sort of exertion of body or mind; a lovely sky was overhead; and they had unlimited facilities for measureless talk. What could be desired more? And so the time passed, till nearly at noon the vast cool-looking cavernous mouth of the colossal church had little by little swallowed up again all the multitude that had that morning come forth from it. And then the crowd began leisurely and saunteringly to stroll away from the Piazza.

In making the family arrangements for the holiday pleasuring, it had been understood that uncle Tancredi, the well-to-do *buttero*, invited the whole party, including Signor Carlo Carena, to an *al fresco* repast at a certain *osteria* situated amid the vineyards between the convent of St. Gregory and the Lateran, which was celebrated for the goodness of its wine *dei Castelli Romani*, and where there was a beautiful *pergola* under which they could have their banquet. A *pergola* is an arrangement of upright and horizontal poles over which vines are trained, a most picturesque mode of cultivating them, and affording a delicious shade to walk or to sit under. Uncle Tancredi would have preferred dining in the upstairs guest-chamber of the little *osteria*; but to the girls the eating *al fresco* was half the fun; and of course the young men thought that the best and pleasantest which most pleased their sweet-hearts. So when the piazze began to be emptied, our friends

prepared to move off to the promised treat. Uncle Tancredi had not failed to extend his invitation in very courteous terms to Ninetta, when he found that she was there as Lucia's friend. But poor Ninetta hardly knew what to do about it. Her grand French lover, who was to make her a *contessa*, had, as has been seen, especially charged her to remain where she was till he should come back to her. But she did not like remaining there alone. And then the promised dinner, at that season of the year when dinners were so scarce with her, was a temptation that her young appetite could with difficulty resist. And it would be so delightful, so utterly paradisiacal under the *pergola*, out away there by the Lateran—as good every bit as being in the country. And then again, on the other hand, she had seen the little party of French troopers trotting away down the piazza as soon as ever the procession had re-entered the Church. Whether her Hector had been with them she had not been able to see, and she hesitated painfully awhile whether she should go with her friends or not. She looked wistfully round the wide piazza now nearly empty, and saw nothing save a few lingering peasants and Romans of her own station in life. The others knew well enough what her hesitation was caused by, but Uncle Tancredi, after his experience of the morning, had delicacy enough to say no word save reiterated assurances that she would be most welcome if she would go with them. Lucia whispered in her ear, 'He won't come now. Perhaps he can't. He is obliged to go with the soldiers. You had better come with us!'

Then Ninetta gulped down her disappointment, and tried to console herself with the prospect of a dinner, and they all walked off together, Nanni and little Clelia, Carlo and the superb Lucia duly paired, and Uncle Tancredi and Ninetta thus again forced into a *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FESTA AT THE OSTERIA.

THE little *festa* at the *osteria* behind the convent of St. Gregory, on the hill just beyond the Coliseum, was a great success. Four of the party were enjoying some of the choicest of those halcyon hours of which life has so few to offer, and of which it presents no second course. Uncle Tancredi became expansive under the influence of the good Velletri wine, and even poor little Ninetta, feeding herself with golden dreams of the future, permitted herself to enjoy the good things of the present moment.

They had finished their dinner, and the men had lighted their cigars, while the girls pretended to take whiffs from them, going off

into paroxysms of coughing and laughter, when who should make his appearance, quietly sauntering out of the *osteria*, but Mr. Jenkins, the American sculptor, otherwise Signor Chianquinsi.

‘Well, it is odd enough that we should meet a second time on such a day as this, and in such a place,’ said he, coming up to the table at which our friends were sitting; ‘I take it as a good omen that we shall hit it off together to-morrow morning, friend Carena.’

‘I desire nothing better, Signore,’ said Carlo, who had at first been a little bit inclined to fall back into his suspicions again at this second appearance of his Lucia’s patron. He was reassured, however, by the absolute frankness and absence of the smallest embarrassment on the part of Lucia. ‘But it remains to be seen,’ he added, ‘whether I shall be fortunate enough to suit your excellency.’

‘Well, I think you will. Was it not you who blocked out Signor Carelli’s Psyche? I saw Carelli just after I parted from you this morning; and I should like to put my things into the hands of the man who did that piece of work. Don’t you think that we might as well talk it over at once? We don’t lose time over a bargain in my country.’

‘With all my heart,’ said Carena; ‘but we are the guests here of Signor Tancredi,’ he added, with a little embarrassment, and inclining his head in the direction of the *buttero*.

‘We shall be delighted if your worship will take a seat with us. The wine is not bad, and my niece here tells me that you have been very kind to her,’ said Tancredi, with the ready courtesy of a Roman peasant.

‘Thank you, Signore Buttero,’ said Jenkins, knowing well that the recognition of his host’s position in life would be felt to be complimentary. ‘You have chosen a delightful place for your *merenda*, and I shall be most happy to be allowed to share it with you.’

Then, after a little talk, in the course of which terms between him and Carlo were arranged to the entire satisfaction of both parties, the talk became general; and Jenkins showed his perfect knowledge of Roman people and their ways by joining in the bantering which was going on upon the subject of the mutual relationship of the two young couples, in a manner which effectually cured Carlo of all tendency to jealousy. The American did not, however, so readily understand what the position of Ninetta was as regarded the others of the group. Had so extremely pretty a girl as he perceived her to be no lover, then? A few indirect questions brought out all the truth, somewhat to poor Ninetta’s

confusion, yet somewhat to her triumph also. And at last the magnificent name of Hector de Rampont was elicited also. And thereupon Carlo Carena perceived that a singular and sudden look of gravity and displeasure came over the face of his future patron and master Signor Chianquinsi. None of the others observed it, being less gifted with eye- and mind-sight than the young sculptor's workman.

The rest of the afternoon, however, passed in pleasant gossip enough, so that by the time the *buttero* signified that the moment had come when he and his must set out, on their return to their distant home at the foot of the Alban hills, Signor Chianquinsi, as they all called him, had become well acquainted with each member of the party.

Now it was a long walk from the *osteria* where they had been dining to Lucia's home in the Trastevere; and she and Carlo had looked forward to the pleasure of the *tête-à-tête* to which it would give occasion. But Signor Chianquinsi did not seem inclined to quit them. Civility forbade their telling him that they had rather walk home by themselves: and so they strolled away in the direction of the Coliseum together. Once again Carlo felt a temptation to give way to jealousy rising in his mind. But the American soon set it at rest, by indicating very clearly that it was his companionship, and not that of Lucia, that he wanted.

He began by expressing his hope that Carlo would remain with him, and spoke of the excellence of the work he had done for Signor Carelli. Then going on to talk in a friendly manner of the young man's prospects and interests, he asked him when he and Lucia were to be made one, and said that he hoped the arrangement which he had just concluded with him might seem to him to justify their marriage at an early day.

'Ah! *mio buono signore*,' said Carlo, 'if that were all, Lucia and I would have made up our minds to face the world together long since. But how can we be married without her father's consent, and how can we hope to get that? Signor Savelli,' he added, looking back over his shoulder to see that Lucia, who had rather lackadaisically fallen a little to the rear, while the two men had been talking, was out of hearing, and speaking with a bitter irony, 'Signor Savelli, it seems, has other views for his daughter.'

'But if I have my eyes in my head to see, there is not much chance of the Signorina Lucia changing her present views. What objection can her father make?'

Then Carlo, again assuring himself that Lucia could not overhear him, explained to him in half a dozen words the real nature and cause of that noble Roman's objection to give his daughter to

an honest workman, and of his 'views' respecting her, to the unmitigated disgust and indignation of the American. And so warm was his expression of it, that Carlo was led on to justify what he had said by recounting one or two cases in which to all appearance his own intervention had succeeded in saving the poor girl from finding herself in positions of very painful difficulty and danger.

'Aha! oh, that was it, was it? Matters begin to look a little more promising. I think—I begin to think that we shall find the means of bringing this excellent father to reason.'

'I don't understand what your worship means?' said Carlo, who was quite mystified by Signor Chianquinsi's incomprehensible utterances.

'Well, what I mean is this. I am inclined to think that a little word from the Vicar-General might have great persuasive power with Signor Savelli. And I think that a knowledge of such facts as you have been telling me would induce the Vicar-General to speak that little word. That's all.'

'The Vicar-General! Ay, like enough, if I was some great gentleman, or only so much as had a *canonico* for my brother or uncle. But how is a poor artist to get speech with the Vicar-General?'

'Well, I think I can promise to manage that part of the matter for you,' said Jenkins, speaking in a slow and quiet sort of tone. 'You put down a clear statement of the story you told me just now on paper, and give it to me; and if I am not mistaken, I think we shall find Signor Alessandro Savelli very shortly disposed to hear reason.'

Carlo was so profuse in the expressions of his gratitude and delight, that Lucia, who had been lagging behind not in the very best humour with her friend Signor Chianquinsi, perceived that something of interest had passed between the two men, and stepped up, looking from the face of one to the other.

'What is it, Carlo?' she said; 'what has Signor Chianquinsi been saying that has pleased you so much?'

Carlo felt some difficulty in answering her, and looked towards the American.

'I have been telling my friend Carlo, that if he could only manage to get the consent of a certain young lady, I think I could manage to get the consent of the young lady's father to their being married as soon as they like.'

'What young lady? Carlo doesn't want to be married to any young lady. What does it mean? Why don't you speak, Carlo? Why don't you tell him?' said simple-minded, straightforward

Lucia, with flashing eyes and twitching mouth, that seemed on the point of bursting into tears.

‘I thought he wanted to marry you,’ said Jenkins very quietly.

‘What does it all mean? I am not a young lady! Do speak to me, Carlo,’ said the poor girl, almost sobbing.

‘Why, Lucia, you know I have no thought but of you. When Signor Chianquinsi says a young lady, he means you. There is no other young lady or young woman of any sort in question.’

‘Then what does Signor Chianquinsi mean by your getting the consent of a young lady to marry you?’ said Lucia, now palpably sobbing.

‘What I mean is this,’ said that gentleman with his usual quiet manner; ‘if you, Lucia Savelli, are ready to make my friend Carlo here a happy man, I think I can promise that your father will give his consent to your marriage. Is that clear enough?’

‘*Madonna mia, sarà vero?* Can it be true? How is it possible? You know my father then, Signore? What a wonderful man! Did not I say, Carlo, that these Inglesi could do things that our people can’t do; can do in short anything they choose to do? But it can’t be true!’

‘It *can* be true, and I think it will be true, Signorina Lucia, if you will say the word. Are you willing to marry Carlo as soon as you have your father’s permission to do so? That’s all about it,’ returned Jenkins with a phlegmatic manner, or the assumption of it, which contrasted amusingly with the mobile nervous agitation of the Roman girl.

‘Willing, *Dio mio!* Carlo knows whether I am willing; oh, if it should only be true!’

‘My own darling Lucia! *anima mia!* let us thank our kind friend, the best friend we ever had,’ said Carlo, taking the girl’s willing hand.

‘Thank him! how can we ever thank him enough? It is too wonderful. Do you believe it, Carlo? Do you think he can make father consent? Is it possible?’

‘Certainly, I think—I hope so. Signor Chianquinsi has reason to think that he will succeed in doing so. But, indeed, indeed, sir,’ said Carlo, with tears in his eyes and tears in his voice, ‘Lucia says truly that we can never thank you enough. All our happiness, the happiness of our lives, will be due to you.’

‘Well, I hope it may turn out so. You and Lucia wish to be married. I think I can find the means of inducing your father to give his consent. The rest is for your own consideration. But when I joined you and the Signorina Lucia just now in your walk

home from the *osteria*, I had it in my mind to speak to you about another matter. Otherwise I should have known better than to have spoiled your walk with your sweetheart.'

'Oh, Signore, can you think——' said Carlo, blushing like a girl.

'To be sure. Do you take me for a fool or a brute? But now look here, friend Carlo. That pretty girl whom the Signorina Lucia had with her this morning, and again at the *osteria*—her friend—what is her name?'

'What is la Ninetta's real name, Lucia?' asked Carlo.

'Assunta degl' Innocenti; they call her Ninetta for short,' said Lucia.

'Poor child,' said the American; 'I heard what you were all saying there under the *pergola*, and—I am afraid that she will get into trouble. Yes, I am; and that is what I wanted to speak to you about.'

'What is it, Signore? I believe her to be a very good girl. Has she done anything wrong? I am sure if I or Lucia can help her in any way we shall be most ready to do so. But——'

'This lover of hers. It so happens that I know all about him very well. Done wrong? Poor silly little thing! What she has done wrong is to give her silly little heart to as big a rascal as is within the walls of Rome, and that is saying a great deal.'

'A French officer, Mossoo Hector de Rampont?' said Carlo.

'He has promised to make Ninetta a contessa,' said Lucia; 'for my part, I had rather——'

'Have an honest workman than a scoundrelly gentleman, or one who calls himself such. I should think so, indeed. But as for making her a countess, he is about as likely to make me Pope. Bah! he has no thought of marrying her, poor little fool.'

'*Madonna mia!*' ejaculated Lucia, 'and she so fond of him, and so proud of being his wife.'

'His wife; pshaw! You must make her understand that he means nothing of the sort; that he would not even keep her as his mistress long. I know all about him, and about a poor girl whom he has just now abandoned, after enticing her away from her home. He is a regular bad lot.'

'It will be no use telling her so,' said Carlo, 'she will never believe it. She would say that we were against him because he is one of the French officers.'

'And reason enough too,' cried Lucia, with her eyes flashing; 'I have no patience with a Roman girl who——'

'That is all very well, Signorina Lucia,' said Jenkins quietly; 'but girls when they fall in love are not always able to take an

entirely sound and unprejudiced view of men and things. And now the question is how to save your friend from this rascal, who has persuaded her to listen to him.'

'Your worship says well. Yes, that is the question,' said Carlo; 'and how can we persuade her to listen to reason?'

'Well, that is the difficulty,' said the American. 'I say,' he added, after thinking for a minute or two, 'do you know whether La Ninetta can read?'

'Yes,' said Lucia, 'I know she can. Her business leaves her nothing to do almost all the summer, and last summer, with a little help from an old priest, who lives in the same house, she learned to read very well, even written letters. And I know she has had letters from her French lover, because she has shown them to me, and once she read one to me—a beautiful letter it was. To think that it could be written by such a one as your worship says this man is.'

'Well, then, I'll tell you what we will do. I will show her some other beautiful letters written by this beautiful gentleman; she will see that they are signed by him, and she will see that the handwriting is the same. Or perhaps it will be better that you should show them to her, Signorina Lucia. I will go to the unfortunate girl he has deceived and abandoned; and I make no doubt that I shall be able to get some of these precious letters into my hands. You come to the studio to-morrow morning, and bring her with you. You had better not tell her anything about the object of your coming. You can get her to walk with you, she has nothing to do in this weather. Then tell her that you have to make an appointment with me, and let her wait a few minutes in the workshop. My friend Carlo will be there, you know; and you come into the inner room to me.'

'And your worship—' (*vossignoria* was the word used, which has been so translated in these pages, for want of a better equivalent;)—'your worship won't forget the other little matter about Lucia's father?' said Carlo, looking somewhat wistfully into the American sculptor's face.

'Little matter!' echoed Jenkins; 'why, that is the great matter of all. Never fear. I make no doubt of putting all that to rights. The person who will whisper a word in the ear of the Cardinal Governor is one not likely to be disregarded. I wish we were only as sure of setting this poor pretty fool of a Ninetta free of her rascally Frenchman. And now, my friends, *à rivederci*. You will come to the studio at six to-morrow morning, Carlo, and we'll get to work at once. And you, Signorina, will come as soon as you

can bring La Ninetta with you. And perhaps we will have a sitting for the "America" afterwards.'

And so the trio parted.

CHAPTER X.

SIGNOR CHIANQUINSI'S CONSOLATION.

THE next morning after that festival of the *Corpus Domini* that was so memorable an one to most of the little party who have been introduced to the reader, Mr. Jenkins, *alias* Signor Chianquinsi, was up and at his studio before Carlo had reached it. The first hours after sunrise, as the last before his setting, are the golden hours of an Italian summer day, and the American sculptor was a sufficiently 'old Roman' to have learned to profit by and enjoy them. He had spoken a few words to the workman whose duty it was to be there before him, and to open the studio, and was sitting on an old sofa placed against the wall under the northern window, immediately in front of which was the clay on which Signor Jenkins was at that time employed. He had not, however, yet lifted from it the wet cloths which covered the clay, the careful removal of which is always the sculptor's first care on arriving at his studio; but was engaged in arranging some letters, spread out on the sofa by his side, and reading certain passages of them here and there, which he was marking with a pencil.

Presently there was a knock at the door of the inner studio, in which the sculptor was sitting, and in answer to his *avanti* (forwards), a head was advanced between the half-open door and the doorpost, and a '*permesso?*' uttered in Carlo's robust tenor voice.

'Come in, friend Carlo; you've brought the Signorina Lucia with you, I hope; ay, there she is. Come in, both of you. You see I have not forgotten what I promised. As for your own affair, Signorina Lucia' (the American was very punctilious with his 'Signorina;': an Italian would have called the girl by some abbreviated nickname; so, probably, Jenkins might have done, had she been other than so superbly beautiful)—'as to your affair, you may consider that as good as settled. It will be so in the course of to-day. When you ask your father's permission to marry our friend here, you will find that the request will be very graciously received, and the paternal permission and blessing granted. But now as to this business of that poor unhappy little Ninetta. I have got the loan of the letters—not without some difficulty, I can tell you—and here they are. I want you, you know, to show them to her.'

'But I can read but very little, *Signore mio*; that is, as yet,' said Lucia, with a glance at Carlo, as she put in the last qualifying clause—'and how shall I know?'

‘I have thought of all that,’ said Mr. Jenkins; ‘I have marked the passages you must point out to her with a red pencil. She will read them; she will read them to you, no doubt; and then you will understand it all; and I am sure I could say nothing better than you will say. And it will come better from you.’

‘I will try to persuade her all I can, Signore; that you may be sure of,’ returned Lucia; ‘but does not your worship think that it would be best for you to speak to her yourself too? She will think so much more of what you say.’

‘Well, I will try my hand. But I think you had better begin it. Now, look here. In this letter he makes her predecessor exactly the same promises that he has made to Ninetta. *She* is to be his wife, and Countess de Rampont. *She* is to go and be mistress of his ancestral castle, and all the rest of it. Then come all the same excuses for not marrying her immediately; the same difficulties in the way, the same putting off the happy day until after the death of an uncle, who is in fact dying, and whose death he expects to hear of by every post. I wonder to how many other girls he has told the same lies. He makes no variation at all. Well, then the unfortunate girl believes it all, and suffers herself to be persuaded by him. Then for a little while—a very little while—the letters contain but a few words each, mere appointments for meeting. Then, very soon the gentleman gets tired of his new conquest; here are letters putting off meetings, without a word of explanation. Till at last we come to the shameful, brutal end of the story, in this letter, telling his victim that he wants nothing more of her—that circumstances have changed in a manner that must put an end to anything further between them. Ah!’ concluded Signor Chianquinsi, drawing a very long breath through his teeth, ‘I think I must allow myself the luxury of giving that fellow a beating somehow or other, one of these days. The danger would be that one would murder the brute from the impossibility of making up one’s mind to leave off. Well, what do you say to such a gentleman as that, and his love, and his letters, eh, Signorina Lucia?’

‘*Che vuola chi si dica!* What would you that one should say?’ replied Lucia, using the common popular form of stating a nonplus. ‘No doubt, when La Ninetta shall have been made to understand that those letters were written by her *damo* to another girl, she will have no more to say to him.’

‘I should think so, indeed. Let us hope so,’ said the sculptor.

‘If she should do otherwise,’ put in Carlo, ‘she would not be worthy of any further thought from your worship; and I am sure *I should not wish a wife of mine to call her her friend.*’

‘You will not find that she will do so,’ said Jenkins, with a sententious nod of the head.

So Lucia went off to meet poor little Ninetta, who was near at hand, little guessing the grief and desperate mortification that awaited her, poor child! Very soon the two girls came back together, Ninetta chatting gaily, and evidently mystified by her companion’s reticent and embarrassed air.

Carlo opened the door of the studio to them, and then having briefly saluted Ninetta, suddenly withdrew into the inner studio, where Mr. Jenkins was, leaving the two girls alone in the outer room. The sculptor asked him, by a silent motion of the head and eyes, whether Ninetta were come, and he answered in the same manner by a glance at the door. They continued in silence, and in a very few minutes began to hear the ordinarily silvery voice of Ninetta, rising to tones of shrill expostulation and anger. Then, after another pause of silence, there was a sound of sobbing and wailing, in which both girls seemed to be joining. And then, after a while, the murmuring of a long conversation, sufficiently protracted to try the patience of the sculptor and his workman, who were awaiting the issue. At last Jenkins opened the door, and went and sate himself on the old sofa by the side of the still silently weeping Ninetta. He took her hand in his, and set about the work of consoling her as best he knew how.

It was not an easy task; for many feelings, all of them deeply wounded and mortified, were seething and struggling together in the poor girl’s breast. There was disappointed love, though that probably was not the deepest wound; there was outraged pride; there was humiliation in the eyes of her friends and companions; there was the destruction of high hopes. It was very bitter. And Signor Chianquinsi had an arduous task. But he persevered with it, persevered with it so long, that Lucia and Carlo, finding themselves apparently *de trop*, stole off into the other room, minded to attend to their own affairs.

I do not think that Signor Chianquinsi altogether completed the work of consolation upon that occasion. But that he was fully successful before he left off may be inferred from the fact that La Ninetta now calls herself La Signora Chianquinsi, never having been able to learn any other mode of pronouncing her husband’s name; though she has learned many things, and is still an exceedingly popular and admired personage in the artist world of Rome, and an acknowledged ornament of the peculiar artistic society of the Eternal City.

The End.

Some Early Spanish Novels.

'I AM of opinion,' said Cervantes, in the Prologue to his 'Moral Tales,' 'and it is indeed the fact, that I have been the first to write original tales in Spanish: others which exist in that language have been borrowed from foreign sources, but these are my own, neither thefts nor imitations; my own brain conceived them, my own pen gave birth to them, and they have been nurtured in the arms of the press.'

The word *Novela*, which Cervantes used in this passage, and which has been interpreted 'tale,' was less limited in application in his age than now. Boccaccio, indeed, illustrated its Italian equivalent by a triple synonym, fable, parable, or story; and this fact of Cervantes, like most facts, remains open to considerable question. Even if Cervantes defined *novela*, as perhaps we may fairly define it to be, the relation of a feigned but probable action, cutting it off from mythology by its probability, and from what is known as history by its fiction, we must charge the immortal author of 'Don Quixote' with want of integrity or defect of understanding. Either he had not heard of the original *novelas* preceding his own, or he deliberately chose to assert what he knew was not the truth.

It will scarcely be supposed that so engaging and instructive a portion of human entertainment as novels was unknown to the Spanish nation before the time of Cervantes. The Castilian had been applied to literary uses long before the age of that great author, and the *novela* is perhaps the first subject to which it was consecrated.

The infant people desires entertainment as the infant child, and the recounting of tales was cradled in the Orient simply because the origin of the human race was there. Tales may be transplanted, and doubtless are, from one land to another, but the habit of telling them springs spontaneously wherever men may be found capable of imagination and of communicating the fruits of their fancy. So it cannot be said that story-telling passed from India to Arabia, but only that the Bedouins told their tales later, as their mental culture was more tardy. Each country romances independently, and adorns with rootless flowers after its own fashion the sandy deserts of reality. The very word 'romance'—a name originally applied to the infant children of Latin, and which now signifies a tale, shows the early origin of the literature of fable.

Perhaps the first style of story in Spain was that of those *libros de caballerías* which caused such sad confusion in the *ménage* of La Mancha's cavalier, and which received their *anathema maranatha* from the maimed hero of Lepanto. These books of chivalry constitute a distinct order of narrative. The same may be said of pastoral novels. They are both alike founded on hypothetical conditions of society which have never existed, and are little likely at any time to exist. Amatory novels form another class, such as the 'Carcel de Amor,' the history of the lives of Clareo and Florisea (a work that reminds us not seldom of the 'Theagenes and Chariclea,' which the worthy Heliodorus is said to have preferred to his bishopric), and the 'Selva de Aventuras' of Jeronimo Contreras. The historical novel, if indeed this can be called a novel, embraces such works as 'El Abencerraje' and the 'Guerras Civiles de Granada.' The miscellaneous novel would comprehend the 'Patrañuelo' of Juan de Timoneda, the tales of Juan Aragonés and 'El Conde Lucanor.' Lastly, we have the 'novela picaresca,' of which the chief examples are the famous 'Celestina,' 'Lazarillo de Tormes,' and 'Guzman de Alfarache.'

All these works we have mentioned, which may be fairly called *novelas*, were written before the *novelas* of Cervantes. We propose in this paper to consider at length three only of all these works—those included under the last title, *novela picaresca*; but before doing so, a few words may be said concerning the amatory and the miscellaneous novel, the 'Carcel de Amor' and the 'Conde Lucanor.'

Among the Spanish prose-writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were Juan Manuel and Diego de San Pedro, who wrote respectively 'El Conde Lucanor' and the 'Carcel de Amor.' In both these celebrated works the style of the language is more remarkable than the richness of invention. San Pedro was a *regidor* of Valladolid in the reign of Juan II. The form of his novel is epistolary; the letter-writers are two lovers, Leriano and Laureola. The work affords perhaps the most archaic sentiment in the Spanish language. Sadness is prevalent throughout. Not even Goethe in his most lugubrious 'Werther' was more lugubrious than Leriano. He is first introduced to us as being dragged along by a horseman, whom the author sees suddenly emerging on a wintry day from one of the defiles of the Sierra Morena. The poor wretch cries out from time to time, and when close to San Pedro beseeches him for aid in his extremity. San Pedro, who had more cause for fear than reason for answer, deliberates whether he shall attend to the supplication. It would be an absurdity to go out of his way, but an inhumanity not to

give ear to the prayer of the distressed. To follow him would be dangerous, to desert him cowardly. He ends, however, with that famous conclusion, quoted by Lord Bacon, of Pompey, when he was in commission of purveyance for a famine at Rome, and being dissuaded with great vehemency and instance by his friends from hazarding himself at sea in an extremity of weather, said only to them, *Necesse est ut eam, non ut vivam*. So says San Pedro, and finally follows the captive to Love's Prison, the 'Carcel de Amor,' whither the horseman was hurrying him. Arriving there, Leriano informs the author of his love for Laureola, daughter of Gaulus, King of Macedonia, and San Pedro acts as a pander, first with words, and afterwards with letters. The warm love and entire self-abnegation of Leriano is well contrasted in these missives with the cold, calculating, and conceited selfishness of his mistress. In respect of intelligence her observations remind us of what somebody once said about ideas being like beards, inasmuch as men seldom had them save at maturity, and women never at all. The unhappy hero, when dying, calls for a glass of water, tears the only two letters he had ever received from his lady into little pieces, throws them into the water, and, being raised in his bed, drinks the compound. This *Belle Dame sans Merci* is a type, though considerably improved by Cervantes, of the Marcela of Don Quixote.

The 'Conde Lucanor,' also called the 'Book of Petronio,' consists of some fifty *exemplos* or ensamples, generally moral, which the Count Lucanor heard from his counsellor Petronio. The author flatters himself that he has given in these stories precedents for proper action in all imaginable emergencies of existence. Men's minds vary as much as their faces, of which there are scarcely two alike, but all agree in one point at least—in the desire of pleasure. Pleasure has occupied many positions, but Don Juan, or *Don Johan*, as he calls himself, has placed her in the chair of fable. It is true that this species of narration commends itself alike to the foolish in its popular or exoteric, and to the wise in its esoteric or concealed meaning, to use the words of Spenser, speaking of his dark conceit of the Faery Queen, where more was meant than meets the ear—though scarcely, it may be, so much as has been extracted by the exertions of commentators. The general and particular intentions of what is usually understood by fable are both interesting,—'Just as when a man suffers from diseased liver,' says Don Johan, 'the doctors give medicine to him in which honey or sugar has been mixed, because of the love of the liver for sweet things, so are these instructions of mine given to a suffering world, mixed with fable, because of that world's carnal love of pleasure.'

Don Johan, son of the Infante Don Manuel, and governor of the frontier and kingdom of Murcia, seems to have suffered much from the carelessness of copyists. In the general prologue to his works, he tells a pretty story, bearing on his point, about a Cavalier and a Cobbler.

Now, this cavalier was a great troubadour and made many wonderful songs, but one especially brave and beautiful both in words and tune. People were so delighted with it that they sang nothing else, and the cavalier was accordingly well content. But one day riding through a little street he heard a cobbler singing equally badly both tune and words; so that if any man had never heard the composition properly sung, he would have conceived of it but as an idle and naughty ballad. The author becoming aware of the confusion caused by the cobbler's incapacity was extremely disgusted, and dismounting from his beast sat by the singer's side. But he, entranced by the sweetness of his own music, paid no heed, and continuing his song, confounded still more the confusion he had introduced into the cavalier's composition. Then that cavalier took fair and softly the cobbler's shears, and having cut up into small shreds all the shoes which the cobbler had made, remounted his beast, and went on his way rejoicing. The cobbler having concluded his song to his own satisfaction, happened to require his shears, and looking around saw what had been done. Upon which he uttered an Iliad of imprecations, mingled with expressions very low in the epithetical barometer. Eftsoons with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, he pursued the horseman, who was riding leisurely along the little street. After reviling him, he cited him before the king, who, on hearing the cavalier's defence, that it was but just he should spoil the labour of the cobbler who had spoiled his own labour, to wit the song, dismissed the case with laughter, a caution to the cavalier, and a recompense to the cobbler. A similar story is told of Dante by Sacchetti in one of his novels, but here the cobbler is a blacksmith, and the affair is settled without the intervention of a judge; the blacksmith agreeing in future to sing about Tristan and Lancelot and leave Dante alone.

The ensamples of Don Johan usually conclude with a moral distich. They are most frequently concerned with the illustration of certain doubts which have occurred to the Count about private morality or public policy. Many of the tales are of Eastern origin, and the whole volume is derived from an Eastern type. Here we find several old friends of 'once upon a time,' but many more with a fair claim to originality. On one occasion, for instance, Lucanor mentions that a friend of his, a governor of a small territory, is much troubled by his neighbours' continual depredations, and is in

doubt how to proceed, not wishing to afford a motive for a general attack, which he was too weak to support by any open resistance. On this hint the faithful counsellor speaks and tells the story of the Fox who feigned death.

A certain fox, who had been amusing his leisure hours in a henroost, beguiled by the pleasing nature of his occupation, delayed his departure too long; waited, in fact, till, as the Rabbin would express it, the ascent of the pillar of the dawn. The villagers, an early folk, were already abroad. Reynard, on reflection, thought it his best plan not to attempt an escape, but to lie down in the middle of the lane which ran before the henroost and feign death. Knowing that the flighty purpose ne'er is overtook unless the deed go with it, he carried out his idea forthwith. People passed by, and regarding him as dead gave him no heed. But at last came one who knew, for he had been well educated by the family priest, that the hairs of a fox's head were a certain charm, when placed on the foreheads of young girls, to avoid the influence of an evil eye. With this thought he cut off a large bunch of the fox's fur and went away with it. Another came soon after with the same idea respecting his tail, and another respecting his back, and another respecting his sides, and each cut off a considerable quantity of fur, so that the poor beast was almost shorn. Yet he never moved. Soon after another came who cut off one of his claws, under the impression that it was good for warts, and another who took out a tooth or two to cure the toothache. Yet he never moved. Then at last came one who said, 'A fox's heart is good for palpitation,' and took out his knife—and away went Mr. Fox, for he knew well he could not procure a new heart for love or money. The moral of the story, expressed in the usual distich at the conclusion—

Sufre las cosas en cuanto debieres,
Extraña las otras en cuanto podieres,

is that men in poor circumstances of resistance should suffer as far as honour will permit them, but, beyond that, fight.

In another tale we have a warning against the trusting of what men call friends, that most satirical of English substantives, until we have tried them, and a recommendation to have recourse to divine assistance in the concluding couplet:

Nunca home podrá tan buen amigo fallar
Como Dios que lo quiso por su sangre comprar.

A man advised his son to make as many friends as possible. The son, who had plenty of money and was what is called by a bitter irony a man of pleasure, collected in a short time ten, whom he thought chief friends: men who offered to give not only their souls

but their packsaddles for his benefit : friends beyond Pericles, who was but a friend *usque ad aras*. His father, hearing of this sudden success, was surprised, telling him that he, now an old man, has never been able to collect more than one friend and a half. The son insisted on his friends' loyalty. His father suggested as a trial that he should take a sack, with a dead pig in it, and, bearing it to the houses of each of his friends in succession, adjure them to hide the sack for him while he escaped, for that it contained the body of a man he had murdered. The son, carrying out his father's advice, meets with much sympathy, but more disinclination to receive the deposit. In any other difficulty they would have been all happy to assist him, but in this they all with one accord beg to be excused, and entreat him not to let it be known that he has called upon them. There was one of his friends indeed who offered to provide him a magnificent funeral, and masses for his soul, after he had suffered that extreme penalty—to which his dear friend alluded with a broken utterance and tears. On his return to his father with this unsatisfactory tale of his friends' loyalty, the old man despatched him with the pig to his own half-friend, who received the carcase without a word and concealed it under a row of cabbages. The next day, by his father's advice, the young man smote the half-friend in his face gratis in the market-place, but neither for that insult did he disclose the thing you wot of. In the mean time a murder was really committed of a man, and the youth with the sack was suspected. Then that young man wrote to his father's whole friend, who, after the young man had been condemned, and had said there was no possibility of escape, told the *alcalde* that his own son was the real murderer, and he had none other son but only him. So that youth escaped by the execution of the son of his father's friend.

The chimerical extravagance of this last proof of friendship, which lowers our opinion of the young man more than it exalts our opinion of his preserver, seems to bear a sacred allusion, and not to be intended as a practical example for every-day life. *En el nombre de Dios, Amen*, is the commencement of this series of fables, and they are many of them tinged with the religious belief of their age. All in point of style smack of the old tongue of Spain—the pure, idiomatic, racy, ancient Castilian. They contain some Arabic and many Latin words, to be counted perhaps among those which the author informs the reader he shall use, 'the fairest words I can find.'

Passing over some two hundred years, we come to the 'Celestina.' This well-known tragi-comedy of Calisto and Melibea was published in Medina del Campo in the last year of the fifteenth century.

The story is dramatic in form, being divided into twenty-one acts, though in nothing else. The rule of Horace, *neve minor neu sit quinto production actu*, has been sublimely disregarded in this composition. However, other causes than its length unfit it for the stage. The author of all but the first act was Fernando de Rojas, a name contained in some prefatory verses in the form of an acrostic. As for the author of the first act, *adhuc sub iudice lis est*. Rojas says that opinions were divided between Juan de Mena and Rodrigo Cota. Whoever he was—and there are pages of discussion to determine the difficulty—Rojas imitated him as well as Luca Giordano imitated the objects of his artistic study. Nearly all, if not all, the names of the *dramatis personæ* are taken from the Greek. We have Calisto, the gallant protagonist, and Traso, the cowardly bully; besides Parmeno, Sosia, and Crito, who recall to the reader the plays of Terence and Plautus. The dialogue is lively, but too often degenerates into an exhibition of the author's erudition, entirely out of place with the supposed condition in life of the interlocutors. In the very first act, Sempronio, a servant of Calisto, quotes Solomon on the subject of wine and women, and mentions the names of Seneca, Aristotle, and St. Bernard, while just before the catastrophe of Celestina's leap from the lofty tower, this extraordinary apostle of impudence alludes to Ptolemy, Orestes, Nero, Clytemnestra, Philip, Agrippina, and many others, despairing over the unfortunate defect of memory which forbids her to mention more. The merit of the work is perhaps sufficiently proved by the maimed verses of Cervantes' Donoso:

Segun siente Celesti—
Libro en mi opinion divi—
Si encubriera mas lo huma—

Notwithstanding this opinion, the book has been abused. It has been called Scelestina, and *nequitiarum parens, carcer amorum*. But the moral purpose of the publication is written over the porch, 'to warn the young of the deceitful allurements of Love's domestics.' It appears also in the deaths of the actors. Celestina, the common friend of the hero and heroine, is assassinated. Parmeno and Sempronio perish on the scaffold. Calisto is precipitated from a ladder in a brawl, and Melibea commits suicide in her father's sight. Sorrow, poverty, punishment, disgrace and death, weigh down the opposite scale of amorous seductions and impassioned delight. Judging from the number of editions, this book seems to have been the Don Quixote of its time. Its success ensured numerous imitations, more or less inferior to the original. It has been translated into French, Italian, German, and Gaspar

Barth published even a Latin edition, illustrated with an erudite commentary. Perhaps the most influential secondary cause of its extreme popularity were the foolish curses and fulminations of the clergy. Their wayward and backsliding flock, of course, read every edition as it appeared with the keenest eagerness and assiduity, and the carnal bookseller prospered through the prohibitions of the priest.

The plot is shortly this: Calisto, a youth of rank, follows his bird while hawking to the garden of the heroine Melibea. He falls in love with her, but she receives his ardent vows with the chilling indifference of a vestal. She leaves him, and he has a conference with the learned Sempronio above alluded to. This squire, after having in vain endeavoured to show Calisto woman's worthlessness, by references and quotations more numerous than those of Chanticleer and Dame Partelot in Chaucer's tale, when they were discussing the amount of credit due to the cock's sweven, advises his master to have recourse to Celestina, 'an astute witch, a bearded old lady, wise in every wickedness under the sun.' Calisto follows this counsel. Celestina wins her way as a huckster to Melibea, who, being a maiden, is caught like a moth by the glare of some material for a new head-dress. Various intrigues follow. At last Calisto sees his mistress secretly at night. But the course of true love never runs smooth; a quarrel arises in which Celestina is murdered by her associates, and the other catastrophes already mentioned succeed. There is no room for more than a short specimen of the style of the work. The speech of Celestina, on her first introduction to Melibea, is a fair sample of the marvellous eloquence which enlivens the whole story. Contrasting youth with old age, that lady says, 'Youth is the season of solace and of pleasure, but i'faith old age is but an inn of infirmities and an abode of bitter fancies. It is a friend of fretfulness, a lasting sorrow, an incurable wound, disgrace of the past, punishment of the present, sad anticipation of the future, a crook of osier which bends double under the slightest burden, a roofless cottage open everywhere to the rushing rain, a next-door neighbour to death.' When she is asked whether she would therefore, if she might, live over again, she answers, 'Oh lady! what a fool were that wayfarer who, wearied out with the labour and heat of the day, should wish to begin his journey afresh, only to come after all to the self-same goal again. All these sorrows of which the possession is so sad, are in possession less evil than in expectation, for their end is so much the nearer as their beginning is the more distant. To one who is very tired, nothing is sweeter or better than the timely hostel; so although youth be delightful, he who is old and

wise longs not for it, only he longs for it who is old and foolish; who indeed loves nothing but what he has for ever lost.'

The extreme wrath which this novel must have aroused in the ecclesiastical mind may be inferred from a passage in which the fire of purgatory is somewhat playfully dealt with. Calisto speaking of his love's flame says, 'If the fire of purgatory be anything like this which I feel now, I'd rather my soul was with the souls of the brutes that perish than that it should pass through such a punishment, even to attain the glory of the saints.' His servant objects that this is a species of heresy. 'Why?' says Calisto. 'Because,' replies the servant, 'what you say contradicts the Christian religion.' 'But what signifies that to me?' laughs Calisto. 'Surely you are a Christian!' exclaims the horrified domestic. 'I Christian!' answers lightly his master. 'I am a *Melibeian*. I believe in Melibea. I love Melibea, and Melibea I adore!'

Of the style and language, then, of 'Celestina' this little taste, to quote the learned Coke, must suffice, but it is difficult to avoid an *obiter dictum* on a passage of the famous Bouterwek. After commenting in good set terms on the profligate character of this 'revolting and abandoned composition,' he says, 'Celestina is herself murdered in the most horrible manner imaginable.' Mr. Bouterwek is no doubt right, but he must have received a special inspiration on the subject, for the exact fashion of Celestina's death is by the author left unrecorded.

We pass on to the 'novela picaresca,' or the romance of knavery, of which the earliest important example was published in Antwerp in 1553, under the title of 'The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes, his Fortunes and Misfortunes.' This work opened a new and pleasant path to the literary men of that period. It describes the droll escapades, the witty follies of a fellow born and brought up amidst the dregs of the populace, a beggar and a vagabond. It established a fresh type, a new 'genre,' the 'novela picaresca,' which delighted Spain equally with its extreme opposite, the 'novela caballeresca.' Its author was the famous scholar and soldier—Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. The novel has, like 'Celestina,' little relation to the Church or theology. What little it has brought it into difficulties. The licentious life of some of its divines, of whom the author seems to have held the opinion of Fontaine, *tout homme est homme, et les moines surtout*, and the deceits by which, under the cloak of piety, they encourage and fatten on the superstitions of the vulgar, seemed to a highly sensitive Inquisition to require expurgation at its holy hands. The book has been in consequence sadly mutilated. The third chapter, which treats of the adventures of little Lazarus, the hero of the tale, with a proud but starving squire,

fills up some nine columns, while the next chapter, bearing reference to the iniquities of a certain friar of La Merced, contains about half a dozen lines—sad and solitary survivors of their irreligious associates.

Much the same fate seems to have happened to that portion of the tale which told of the trickeries of the *Buldero*, or seller of Papal indulgences. But the separated parts reunited themselves in most cases with the ease and rapidity of quicksilver: sheep and goats mingled carelessly in the same herd, the literary snake was scotched not killed, and ecclesiastical censure, as usual, augmented the scandal in its endeavour to diminish what it assumed to be immorality.

As Celestina came to signify a woman of her character, so Lazarillo came to signify the boy-guide of a blind person. 'I was born,' says Lazarillo, 'on the river Tormes. My father (may God forgive him!) had for trade the supplying of grist to a water-mill built on the banks of that stream, on which he had been miller for fifteen years. In the water-mill was I born, and therefore was called Lazarillo de Tormes. When I was about eight years old, my father got into trouble about a little inartistic bleeding in some sacks that were sent to the mill, for which he was taken, and confessed and denied not, but confessed, saying, I am the man, and suffered persecution for righteousness' sake. I trust in God that he is at present in glory, since the Gospel calls all such blessed.' His father soon after died, and a certain Moorish ostler, under the plea of buying eggs, occupied his place. His mother, then, being of opinion that home-keeping youths have ever homely wits, hands over Lazarillo to a blind beggar, who, without any other apparent cause than the inherent wolf-like hatred natural among mankind, treats him thus cruelly at the very beginning of their acquaintanceship. There is a large stone bull at the gates of Salamanca, against which the blind beggar advised Lazarus to lay his head, and then he would hear a rumbling within. The boy obeyed, but, as soon as the blind man thought his head near enough, he gave his skull a good push against the stone, causing a three days' headache. 'Poor fool,' said his master, making merry on this occasion, 'dost not know that a blind man's boy should outwit the devil?' From this moment, and after this baptism, Lazarillo suffers a kind of intellectual regeneration, and resolves to use his wits and take care of himself. A series of tricks follows, in which now one party suffers, now the other, including that in which Lazarillo, with the aid of a straw, drinks the old beggar's wine, thus referred to in the curtailed verses addressed by Donoso to Rocinante:

No se me escapó cebá—
 Que esto saqué á Lazari—
 Cuando por hurtar el vi—
 Al ciego le dí la pá—

In revenge for the matter of the stone bull, this device of Lazarillo's is recorded. On a very rainy night, as he and the blind beggar were making the best of their way to what they called home, they were stopped by a broad swift stream which flooded the middle street. Now the beggar-man had a nervous dread about getting his feet wet; therefore his boy said to him 'Come yet a little further where the stream is narrower.' 'Thou art in the right, good boy,' answered the poor blind, and followed the little rogue, until he stopped opposite a large stone pillar that supported a corner of one of the houses. 'Here father,' said he, 'is the narrowest place; now leap with all your might and main.' The rain was coming down in torrents; the poor old fellow was getting wet through, and, owing to his haste to get home, and principally, as Lazarillo thinks, to God's blinding his intelligence in order to give him, Lazarillo, his revenge, he believed him and said,—

'Be sure you set me in the right place, my boy, and then do you go over first.' 'I put him,' continues the young scamp, 'exactly before the pillar, then, leaping, posted myself behind it, looking on him as one who is waiting for a mad bull. The poor blind took a run like a ram, and his head came with such a cruel crash against the pillar that he fell back into the kennel half dead. An ingenious commentator supposes Shakspeare alluded to this incident, when, in 'Much Ado about Nothing,' Signior Benedick says to Count Claudio, 'Ho! now you strike like the blind man; 'twas the boy (Lazarillo?) that stole your meat (wine?), and you'll beat the post.'

Lazarillo serves next a priest at Maqueda, whose treatment of him was worse than that of the blind man. He was almost starved, except at a burying. 'I was never,' he says, 'an enemy of the human race except at that time, and I confess that, in order to get a good dinner, I used to pray to God that He would every day take to Him one of His own.'

A good story is told about the *bodigos*, a holy bread which Lazarillo adores, without daring to receive it, with a hundred kisses. Another about a key of the chest containing these sacred provisions, which Lazarillo hides in his mouth, having nowhere else to hide it, when he goes to sleep. On one occasion, his mouth being half open, the key fell in such a posture that his breath, blowing directly into the tube, composed a kind of impromptu sonata, very shrill and *ff*. This disastrous accident led to his dismissal from

the holy man's service. With his description of the Buldero, or seller of Papal indulgences, may be well compared Chaucer's of the gentil Pardoner of Rouncevall, who on his way from the Court of Rome, came singing 'Come hither, love, to me.' That ecclesiastical officer, with his pigs' bones, which he passed off for saints', was no greater cheat than Mendoza's Buldero. One way in which, with his feigned flattering and japes, he made apes of the people, deserves attention.

In a certain village of the diocese of Toledo it happened that this Buldero had had very ill luck. He took, therefore, privily as an accomplice an alguacil, or officer of the law, as we should now say, a policeman, or more correctly, to retain the *argot* of the original, a 'copper.' This was done by means of money. Every man has his price, says Walpole—an observation to be understood of his virtue. This 'copper' publicly, according to their agreement, accuses the Buldero of forging his indulgences, and a great disturbance ensues. The next day the Buldero preaching as usual from the pulpit, improves the occasion by adverting to the malicious slander of the day preceding, and still advising the congregation to invest in his holy indulgences. In the middle of his discourse enters the 'copper,' who, having prayed and lifted up his eyes, says thus—'My brethren, hear me for a while, afterwards hear him if ye will. This rogue and I agreed to share the profits of these false bulls, for they are indeed all forgeries; but I have repented myself truly of my former sin, and desire now to turn unto righteousness and lead a new life.'

After some more observations of a like kind, reflecting on the character of the Buldero, that individual, who had in the mean time been engaged in the abstraction of fervent prayer, looking up to heaven, requests with a loud voice that if that is true which has been said by the 'copper,' the pulpit may sink with the preacher seven fathoms under the earth, and neither he nor it ever appear again; but that, if what the 'copper' has said be false, then that that 'copper' may, by divine intervention, be put to open shame in the sight of all men. Whereupon the 'copper' immediately falls flat on his back, lifting up his legs one after another, with loud lamentations and foamings at the mouth, and other signs of demoniacal possession. From this state he is eventually released by the kind intercession of him whom he had so foully calumniated, and so great a number of indulgences is sold soon after, that scarcely a soul in the place remains without one. Old men and maidens, young men and children, come after them with one accord, as though they had been pears 'given away gratis.'

'How many of these masked knaves have in like manner

sheared the harmless fold !' is the concluding soliloquy of Lazarillo — '*¡ Cuantas destas deben de hacer estos burladores entre la inocente gente !*' But herein England, as the Médecin said in Molière of things that are unchangeable, '*Nous avons changé tout cela.*'

Lazarillo finally marries a lady whom the high-priest of San Salvador has chosen to call his housekeeper. Ill tongues of course began to tattle on this occasion, but Lazarillo addresses one of these good-natured neighbours thus : 'If we are to continue friends, take care to say nothing to vex me, for if a man vexes me I don't consider him my friend ; especially if he wants me to be on bad terms with my wife, a thing I love better than all the world besides, and who I dare swear is as good a woman as any in Toledo, and as true.' Thus he shuts up the evil mouths of malice, and thus the story, as far as it was written by Mendoza, ends.

The name of the author of the second part is hidden by clouds of controversial dust. The work is inferior to Mendoza's, but interesting. It tells of Lazarillo going on an expedition against Algiers ; how his vessel foundered in a storm ; how he is turned into a tunny at the bottom of the sea ; how he is paid as wretchedly by the ministers of the fish as he was formerly by the ministers of the faith ; and how he is finally taken in a net and again changed into a man.

Mendoza's book errs not like its predecessor. Lazarillo quotes neither Pliny nor Plato, though Mendoza's wardrobe contained many purple rags, had he wished to sew any on his beggar's raiment. Lazarillo's language is quick, animated, witty, full of that *chispa* or fire which is the chief ornament of this style of story. With regard to his moral character, it was conspicuous, like the statue of Cassius at his wife's funeral, by its absence. The little Lazarus had evidently, on the threshold of life, laid down for himself some such principle as that of Machiavelli—that a man should not labour to attain virtue itself, but only the appearance thereof ; because the credit of virtue is a help, but the use of it a cumber. He of Tormes found it hard for an empty sack to stand upright ; he was willing to fill himself honestly if he could, but if not—why, he filled himself. Pricked by the spurs of poverty and misfortune, he develops day after day a fecundity of invention which interests our imagination while it shocks our integrity.

Truth was for him, as indeed it is generally for the children of Mammon, an abstract expression, used to obtain credit for falsehood. Like that young candidate for military preferment in 'Don Quixote' who went his way singing *seguidillas*, with the most important articles of his apparel tied in a bundle and hung over his shoulder on his sword, in order to save the wear of them by the

way, Lazarillo was generally unlucky enough to serve *catariberas*, who consumed the half of their income in payment for the starching of their shirt-collar.

In the second part, the submarine adventures of the hero in the shape of a tunny constitute a separate kind of romance—the allegoric. Imitated probably from the ‘Golden Ass’ of Apuleius, ‘Gulliver’ was not the least of those who possibly imitated the second part of Lazarillo. It was an ingenious idea to save the self-love of humanity, by ridiculing its vices and absurdities in beings taken from another order of society.

‘Guzman de Alfarache,’ the next work of importance in the category of the ‘Romance of Knavery,’ would be a capital novel, made up of amusement and sauced with wit, were it not for its tedious, frequent, and impertinent digressions. Had Mateo Aleman been writing a treatise ‘De Finibus,’ these wanderings would have been excellent. There can be no greater dispraise of them than the preceding sentence, when we find them in a tale intended chiefly, if not solely, for vulgar entertainment. It is possible to use the scissors in works of this kind, with Le Sage, who ingeniously boasts that he has cut away all the superfluous morality, *retranchant tout la morale superflue*; but then it is so easy to cut away more than was intended, and too frequently there is bound up among the bundle of tares appointed for the burning, full ears of wheat which should have been gathered into the master’s barn.

A strange contrast is presented by Guzman of sententious majesty and immeasurable impudence. He is an archangel, ever about to burst the cloud of his eclipse. His actions, more frequently than those of Lazarillo, occasion doubt about their moral classification: too often the witty rogue degenerates into the wicked reprobate. Too often disgust springs up where the writer perhaps intended only to sow diversion. He commences his history by a breach of the fifth commandment, following therein the footsteps of him of Tormes, who said words concerning her who bore him, which, from the nature and extent of the dishonour they did that lady, cannot be here reproduced. Again, like Lazarillo, the work is left incomplete. Three novels of most disproportionate dimensions to the subject of the principal story, called respectively ‘Osmin and Daraja,’ ‘Dorido and Clorinia,’ and ‘Dorotea,’ of which our space forbids us to mention more than the names, extenuate considerably the episodes which Clemencin charges as errors against Cervantes whom he delights to dishonour.

It is with the conclusion of the second of these tales that the first part of the story abruptly terminates. This fashion of leaving a work unfinished had several advantages, and was therefore generally

followed. First the temper of the public was tried by a sample, and subsequent labour, useless from a commercial point of view, perhaps saved; secondly, it was a novel—at that time a novel artifice to excite curiosity; and, thirdly, it served as a necessary caution to others not to occupy chairs already engaged. We know that Cervantes buried his hero in order to avoid any trespass of this last kind, but even this plan could not avail with *Celestina*, for that ‘profligate woman,’ after, as Bouterwek says, she was ‘herself murdered in the most horrible manner imaginable,’ rose again, and not to such a resurrection of damnation as she must have expected, by the power of Feliciano de Silva.

Notwithstanding the caution of Mateo that the ground was already occupied and partially built on, a certain *soi-disant* Lujan de Sayavedra erected his cottage upon it. Such poaching on other people’s preserves never was and never will be uncommon: most of us know how Gil Polo completed the ‘*Diana*’ of Jorje de Montemayor, and how gratefully Cervantes thanked Avellaneda for his conclusion of ‘*Don Quixote*.’

Like a ship is Guzman, touching at all shores, but never resting long in harbour; like a mouldering wall, continually threatening ruin, and yet never falling; like a leafy tree in summer-time, but not without ripe luscious fruit hidden among its leaves; as the Spaniards say, *entre col y col lechuga*; you will find lettuce among the cabbages. There is no want of variety, and all serves for food or for feasting. When Instruction is abroad, Entertainment occupies her place; and if you cannot find anywhere Entertainment, you are sure to meet with Instruction. Most frequently they are both at hand at once. The mixed appearance of the work—Guzman is a very Proteus—the mosaic of things sacred and profane, of woe and weal, of vice and virtue, and of religion and rascality, making it so true to nature, is well alluded to in some prefatory Latin verses prefixed—

Quis te tanta loqui docuit Guzmanule? quis te
Stercore submersum duxit ad astra modo?

Jura doces, suprema petis, medicamina curas,
Dulcibus et nugis seria mixta doces.

To which Guzmanulus replies, illustrating the purpose of the ‘*Atalaya de la Vida Humana*,’ or ‘Beacon in Life’s Sea,’ as the work is also called, thus, in equally elegant elegiacs,

Sic speciem humanæ vitæ, sic præfero solus,
Prospera complectens, aspera cuncta ferens.
Hæc Aleman variè picta me veste decorat:
Me lege disertum tuque disertus eris.

Aleman himself explains shortly his own work. Guzman is a scholar, well seen in Rhetoric Latin and Greek, who purposes to enter the church. A too great indulgence, however, in vice slightly alters that intention. He is, instead of preaching the Gospel, sent to the galleys at the conclusion of a chequered career, and there occupies his leisure time in writing an account of his adventures. Having wasted the first portion of his life in wickedness and folly, he is unwilling to lose the last in idle regret and unavailing despair. The story is divided into three parts: the first treats of his sally from his mother's house, having eyes, yet seeing not through the thick painted veil of false pleasures. In the second is described at length his life as a *picaro*, his lewd tricks and his misspent years. In the third we read of his calamities and extreme poverty, and the rascally courses he ran into, because he would not bethink himself in time of their inconvenience, nor suffer himself to be ruled by those who were both desirous and able to do him good. As a deformed face loathes a true glass 'so,' says no less an authority than Ben Jonson, 'will an ill man loathe to look in this good book.'

Mateo addresses the intelligent public, in the frontispiece of his work, in no less polite terms than Alarcon. 'If,' said that dramatist, in the preface to his works, 'you abuse my comedies, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that they are good; if, on the contrary, you praise them, I shall still be gratified by the reflection that, although bad, they have cost you money.' 'O virtue-hating Vulgar,' cries Aleman, 'I know, though you don't, your little worth and your little wisdom, your envy, your swiftness in evil report, and your slowness in good report. What reputation of steel cannot your teeth destroy? What virtue continues virtue touched by your tongue? What natural frailties will your cloak charitably cover? What treacle do your eyes behold, which they do not like basilisks empoison? What flower, never so cordial, enters through your ears, which is not converted into venom in the hive of your heart? In what fair green field have you ever trodden without leaving it defiled by your feet? Nay, if it were possible to paint forth to the life the true fashion of Hell and its torments, you alone, I think, and only, might be its perfect counterfeit.'

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'I fled from the confused court; you followed me into my little village; I withdrew myself to solitary shades, and there you made a shot at me, never leaving me at peace. You are a field-mouse nibbling the hard rind of the sour and unsavoury melon, and falling into a surfeit when you come to the sweet—a very unfor-

fortunate [and troublesome fly, which not content to rest amidst the perfume of roses, leaves woods and gardens to settle on a dunghill.]

Plot in this story, strictly speaking, there is none. The hero is the son of a Genoese merchant, a very religious man and a great rascal. He has a large rosary, with beads bigger than hazel-nuts. You might see him every morning at mass kneeling on both knees, with clasped hands raised upwards from his breast, on which his hat hung as on a hatpeg. Notwithstanding his piety, some idle scandal compelled him to fly to Algiers, where, having married a rich Moorish lady and turned Turk for the time, he remained till he saw a favourable opportunity for leaving that wicked land, with all his wife's jewels in his wallet. Reaching home, the irresistible influence of the only true religion and the consideration that he could not call in his debts so conveniently as a Mussulman, made him once more a devout Christian. Such delicacy of conscience and extreme susceptibility of faith could not remain long unrewarded. Guzman's father grew rich and took a charming country-house at Alfarache, near Seville, where, by a notable subtlety of Guzman's mother, our hero was born. On his father's death he begins his travels by arriving at an inn, where the hostess serves him such eggs that, in eating them, he feels the tender bones of untimely chickens tickling his gums, and hears them crackle between his teeth. After various discourses on the goods of this world, a faithful friend, the obedience due to God, the illegality of duels, quotations from St. Christopher, St. Bernard, St. Stephen, St. Paul, St. James, Constantine the Great, and Seneca, the author relates how Guzman was a second time cozened by a bad host, who gave him for his dinner, not, as the Spanish proverb says, 'a cat for a hare,' but a mule for a calf. He is afterwards by mistake apprehended as a thief by the Santa Hermandad. Being released, of course without any compensation for his unjustly inflicted sufferings—for this seems to be of the essence of all systems of legislation—he becomes an innkeeper's boy, then, turning street beggar, so arrives at Madrid. There, after a somewhat wearisome discourse on honour and certain vices in shopkeepers, notaries, judges, artificers, apothecaries, physicians, and lawyers, he enters into service with a cook. Then follows a merry story, in which himself and the cook's wife are the protagonists. He then becomes a gallant, and afterwards a soldier, and enlists for the Italian wars. He continues this vagabond life till he considers himself nearly fitted for the Church, which he is on the point of entering when one evening, as he is sprinkling himself with holy water in the font of *Santa Maria del Val*, he becomes aware of a company of pretty women. A sugared speech or two sponges out the spirit of sanctity. He pursues them out of the church, through

a lane of lofty elm-trees, to the river-side, where they sit down on a little green meadow, making their cushions of the grass. These ladies were a hostess, with her two daughters, more beautiful than Castor and Pollux, with a few friends, but not of such grace as Grace, the eldest daughter of the hostess. This Grace was a cabinet of conceits—her beauty could only be expressed by silence—with looks brimful of laughter. ‘I set,’ says Guzman, ‘my eyes on hers, and it seemed as if the visual beams, in both reconcentrated within, struck home on our souls.’ This is a sample of the passages by no means few, in which Mateo Aleman says things harder to be understood even than those of Mr. Browning, or of the apostle Paul.

Grace’s singing to the viol seemed to arrest time. About nightfall they returned home, when Grace, perceiving Guzman’s modesty—a new and interesting feature in this son of impudence—pretends, as a last resource, to stumble, and her lover can do no less than catch her in his arms. In so doing, by the merest accident, his face touches hers.

The next morning at the schools his attention is somewhat distracted; he remains in a sort of stupor, nor is he aroused even by the varied delights of a theological lecture, than which, as well we know, the harp of Orpheus is not more charming. He returns home, rushes up to his bedroom, buries his face in the sheets, and his sobs in the blanket. Feeling somewhat better after this, he puts on his cloak, and, putting off his next lecture, visits the physician of his soul. Not a cumin seed did he now care for preaching salvation; he had matriculated in the university of love. Grace was his rector, Grace his tutor, and her will the *curriculum* of his studies. In fine, says Guzman, *Señores míos, con perdon de vuestras mercedes, caséme*. The charming Grace soon after, *varium et mutabile*, elopes naturally enough with a new lover to Italy. Guzman is again reduced to poverty; he again puts his sickle into other men’s corn, and is condemned to the galleys for life. There he finds out that only virtue and goodness bring a man to heaven, that this world is a howling wilderness, that riches are dross, &c., &c., in short becomes what old women call converted. He then tells a short tale—the whole book is full of them—to the following purpose. There was once a famous painter, so excellent in his art that he had not his fellow in the world. A rich gentleman agreed with this artist for a horse running away as fast as his legs could carry him. The painter accomplished the work, and placed it against the wall to dry. Soon after the gentleman came to see how the picture was going on, and the painter showed it him, telling him it was already finished. Now, as the master had placed the canvas carelessly, it chanced that the horse was turned

upside down with his feet in the air. The gentleman, conceiving that the work had not been done in the exact manner he desired, said, 'Sir, I wished a horse running away: this, on the contrary, seems to be rolling on the ground.' The discreet artist replied, 'Sir, you have no great insight in painting: you will find the picture you want if you will be good enough to turn the canvas.' The picture was then restored to its natural position, and the gentleman rested well content, equally pleased with the majesty of the design and the discovery of his own mistake. So, says the converted Guzman, divine works appear sometimes topsy-turvy, but we have only to turn the table, and we shall recognise perfection. He soon after turns traitor, reveals a conspiracy of the galley-slaves, and is rewarded with his freedom and a full pardon. And so the story ends.

JAMES MEW.

Alice.

THE winds gently sighing one star-lighted night,
 Waft the fishing-boats out from the bay;
 And golden-haired Alice, with eyes gleaming bright,
 Waits and watches them sailing away:
 And she murmurs these words as they fade from her sight,
 'O bounteous, beautiful sea,
 Send the spoil to their nets,
 A fair breeze to their sails,
 And my true love, to-morrow, to me.'

The morning broke darkly—the shingle was white
 With the feathery far-driven foam;
 And Alice, with lips white as snow with affright,
 Passes, speeding away from her home:
 And they hear her sad voice in the grey morning light,
 'O powerful, ravenous sea,
 Keep the spoil in thy depths,
 Hold the breeze on thy breast.
 But return my true lover to me.'

She lost him for ever. And when the cold sheen
 Of the star-shine illumines the waves;
 The form of fair Alice may often be seen,
 On the sands, near the tempest-arched caves:
 And she sings her weird song in the morning air keen,
 'O merciless, death-dealing sea,
 That steals from us our best,
 Take me into his rest,
 Or restore my lost treasure to me.'



ALICE.

An Office Secret.

BY JAMES PAYN.

I.

I HAVE never 'travelled' myself, except for pleasure (and generally found that I had left it, after all, at home), but in early life I made some acquaintances among the gentlemen of the Bag. In the north of England where I went to fish at the latter end of the year, I often found the 'Commercial' rooms much snugger than the more select apartments of those fine old inns which are their country's, or at all events their county's, pride. To find oneself quite alone in a sitting-room forty feet by thirty, with the provincial paper and a local directory; a pair of huge wax candles that dimly suggest some religious ceremony of a stately kind; and the knowledge that that catafalque—the four-poster—is waiting for one in the adjoining apartment, is a serious situation; and I was generally glad to exchange it for the warmth and geniality of the public room below. It is among the things 'not generally known,' and which has escaped the microscope of Mr. Timbs, that the table of the British commercial traveller is better served than that of any amateur. Both classes indeed are here to-day and gone to-morrow, but the former is sure to return again, and it is therefore worth Boniface's while to make him comfortable. His meals are plain, but they are excellent of their kind, and even his sherry is not quite so pernicious as that served to the aristocracy on the first floor: if it is, he knows how to correct its ill effects with hot whisky and water. As for entombing him in a four-poster bed, I believe the landlord would as soon venture to suggest that he should have four posters to his travelling trap, which, though a little hearselike in its general effect (like those vehicles which combine accommodation for the mourning party as well as for the object of their lamentation), runs easily enough at the heels of his strong bay mare.

It was on a dull November evening, years ago, that I first made acquaintance with Dick Bedford in the commercial room of the *Golden Dragon* at Wallington. I had been employed all day in my favourite sport, and the fog and the cold were being slowly expelled from my marrow by the action of the huge red fire, as I sat alone in the front of it, when Dick came in, with a genial glow in

his face and eyes, that was itself equal to a yule log, and seemed to anticipate in its expression of good will and jollity the coming Christmas. Dick was not at all, it must be confessed, of an aristocratic type: though he had all the self-confidence of a guardsman; wore his hair as closely cropped as any man in a crack regiment; and had a deep-seated consciousness of his clothes—which was hardly to be wondered at. I never saw a man dressed with such an eye to colour, and to the variety of it. He must have taken Joseph as his model, at least so far as his apparel went (for nothing will induce me to go into private character); and Joseph must have been of a very different size from himself, from the manner in which it fitted him. His garments, however, many-hued as they were, passed almost without notice: the spectator's eye was at once riveted by his cravat, which was of scarlet and decorated by an enormous cairngorm pin. Its value might have been a pound (Scots), but if it had been the Pitt diamond he could not have taken a greater pride in the possession of it. He used to speak of it, as the Irish do of their sweethearts, as 'My Jewel.'

Even at that time, though a young man, he was inclined to corpulency, and walked on the tips of his toes, as all fat men do so long as nature permits, but not, as in their case, to give an idea of airiness. It was his bright and cheery disposition which made him always think he was Mercury on the top of a heaven-kissing hill, though he looked much more like Silenus. You would have said, looking at his face which was red, and his hands which were redder (though as clean as washed carrots), that he was a good-natured vulgar fellow, but after one glance at his eyes, you acknowledged that he must be a clever one. I have seen many bright eyes in my time (some, alas, to my sorrow), but never a pair so bright as Dick's, save in the head of a bird. He had a quick way of turning his head too, like a bird, and he rose early, as I afterwards discovered, and caught the worm whenever it was to be found. His voice was clear and ringing and had a certain vigour in it that gave significance to everything he said, however commonplace.

'Evening, sir,'—he clipped his speech as men of his class often do, perhaps to give an impression that their time is valuable—'no rain, thank heaven, but it's cold weather.'

'Yes,' said I; 'very cold,' and made room for him by the fire.

'I see your face, I believe, for the first time at the *Golden Dragon*: you find things dull at Wallington, no doubt: slack time?'

'I find the water rather slack,' said I, smiling and pointing to my creel in the corner.

'Oh, I see—fishing line. I knew you were not money-and-orders.'

‘Indeed: you must have great discernment.’

‘No: only caution; asked the waiter before I came in—Brandy and water?’

‘No, I thank you; I never drink before dinner.’

‘And you thought to pass yourself off as one of us! Sanguine.—Good sport?’

‘You will be able to judge for yourself,’ returned I, ‘for I have ventured to tell the landlord to add what fish I caught to the bill of fare.’

‘Ah, landlords don’t like that. Charge you corkage—though corkage on fish ridiculous unless it was a bottle-nosed whale.—Hullo! pillar matchbox on the mantelpiece. “Light only on the box.” The *Dragon* is going it.’

‘It is a most capital discovery,’ said I.

‘Capital: but too new for the *Dragon*. Steel and flint with touch-paper, that’s its game. You may depend upon it their man is coming here—the man that travels with the matches. Delicate compliment. Put it away when he’s gone.’

‘You don’t seem to have a very high opinion of mankind,’ said I, laughing.

‘Know it too well; all *Dragons*—except the women. By jingo, I thought so: there’s his trap. We’ll have a game.’

‘What game?’

‘Fun with the match-man. Play him a trick. You’ll help me?’

‘Indeed I won’t,’ cried I, aghast. ‘I don’t know the gentleman.’

‘Neither do I; but he’s sure to like it. His firm is full of fun. Trade-mark an Ark, and motto—Safety from *fire*: the greatest joke out in trade-marks.’

He had snatched down the box from the mantelpiece, and rubbed the match-paper at the sides on the heels of his boots while he was speaking. He made a grab at one of *my* boots, but I withdrew it.

The next moment entered the traveller. He was a fresh-complexioned, honest-looking fellow, more diffident than most men of his class, perhaps because he was younger.

‘Good evening, gentlemen. Pray don’t move.’

It was with difficulty we could get him to take a chair within radius of the fire, and then he was very silent. He sat quite quiet, looking at and listening to my companion as though he were a divinity, for Mr. Bedford, as I afterwards learnt, had already made a figure in the commercial world, or at least in that portion of it which revolves. He was in the fifth form of his school, as it were, and the new-comer had only just joined it.

'These are *your* matches, are they not?' said Mr. Bedford pointing to the pillar box.

Then the young man's tongue was loosened, just as when the fifth-form boy condescends to ask his junior a question about his home, and he became eloquent. There was nothing like these matches. They were the greatest discovery of the universe since the sun itself was invented, and had the advantage in many respects over even that. They rendered conflagrations impossible, and Fire Insurance Companies an anomaly. And then to think that they should only light on the box!

'You make people believe *that*, do you?' said Bedford, slyly.

'Believe? why, it's as true as taxes!'

'Ah, well, you're right to stick to it. To consult the interests of your employers is your first duty. But among friends, and in the commercial room—I am in the wool line; my friend here travels for Chubb—there need be no gammon, you know.'

'Gammon!' echoed the astonished youth. He was as much shocked (perhaps more so) as if the other had spoken blasphemy. 'But they do light only on the box; we sell millions of them on that very account.'

'Of course you do: everybody believes what you say. It was the same in Charles II.'s time: everybody took it for granted, because the philosophers said so, that if you put a live fish into a vessel filled to the brim with water, it would not run over. Only, one day, some very ordinary fellow like myself chose to try the experiment practically in his own parlour, and spoilt the carpet. You may read about it in the records of the Royal Society. Look here.' He took a match out of the pillar box, rubbed it smartly on his heel, and it broke out into a flame—'There's your theory burst-up.'

If the Golden Dragon on the sign-board had flown down, and come crashing through the window, scale and claw, it could not have astonished our young friend more than this amazing spectacle. If he had been a Papist, he would have crossed himself and cried, '*Vade retro*:' as it was, he only murmured, 'Bless my soul *and* body!'

'By all means,' said Mr. Bedford calmly. 'These little taradiddles of yours will doubtless go down to your employers' account. Still, you see, they *are* taradiddles. To show you it's not the *boot*, we'll try the other one.' He did so with the same result. The young man's eyes came half-way out of his face, which was covered with a profuse perspiration. Presently he jumped up with a cry of joy. 'I see it now; you have been playing me one of your *tricks*, Mr. Bedford.'

‘I? Tricks?’ His air was as grave as that of some Lord Chancellor who had been accused of spirit-rapping.

‘Yes: you know well enough that those are not our matches; you, have filled the box with common lucifers.’

‘Indeed! You have some specimens of your own make about you no doubt. Let us try them.’

With trembling fingers, the poor fellow produced a box from his pocket. Bedford took a match out and struck it on his heel with the same result as before.—‘Shall I try one of this gentleman’s boots, or yours, or the bottom of the mantelpiece?’

But with an exclamation which it is unnecessary to repeat, the young man had fled the room and hurried upstairs.

‘Good heavens!’ said I, ‘he’ll hang himself.’

‘Not a bit of it. He’s only gone to write a letter to his employers to say that it’s all up. They are jokers themselves—they *must* be to have chosen that Ark for their trade-mark—and will be delighted with the whole affair.’

It was with difficulty that I could persuade my companion to send up a message to the young man to explain matters: it was done at last, however, and he came down, and we three had a very friendly evening.

I parted from Mr. Richard Bedford—whom everybody, by the by, called Dick—with the impression that I had never met a cleverer fellow in his way, but at the same time one so devoted to joking. He was vulgar, no doubt; though it struck me even then that he had no mean powers of adapting himself to men of different humours; but the *Golden Dragon* seemed duller than before when he had driven away next morning.

I was not likely to be there again when he came next year, and I thought I had seen and heard the last of him.

II.

FIVE years afterwards, however, at a dinner at a City Company’s, I found myself, to my great astonishment, seated next this very man. The exigencies of evening dress had so toned down his general colouring that I should hardly have recognised him but for the cairngorm pin, which sparkled in his shirt-front like a huge star in a small firmament.

‘Dear me,’ said I involuntarily, ‘*you* here?’

‘Yes, sir, it seems strange, no doubt. But I have got on in the world.’

‘Oh, I didn’t mean *that*,’ said I, with that sensation of ‘prickly

heat' which occurs to all properly constituted persons when they have given offence inadvertently.

'Don't say a word about it,' said he cheerfully. 'Of course it's strange. I still travel, however, though it's on my own business. I've parted from Dull and Dolt, and set up for myself, just opposite their establishment.'

'That must be rather disagreeable to them.'

'I hope so. They were rather disagreeable to me. They thought they could light their match without the box: (you remember, I see); but they will find the box is half the battle. I have got a good slice of their Scotch trade already, and all the Islands.'

'The Islands?'

'Yes, the western ones: Skye and Egg—Here's the snuff, do you take it? that ram's head must have come from Mull—and the rest of them. People think there is nothing to be got there but fleas. Paul Jones harried three of them, and sailed away with only eighteenpence. They wanted working, that's all. The sheep are wild, but they can be shorn, I do assure you.'

'But I never heard of there being anything to shear.'

'I dare say not: they keep it dark, and resent the operation. They call me an interloping Englishman. Let 'em.'

He gave me to understand that he had made a pretty penny—or baubee as he called it—out of these unpromising materials; and he saw that I was glad to hear it. We parted excellent friends.

'We shall meet again at Philippi,' were his last words, as we found our hats, and he delivered them in such solemn tones as very much astonished the waiter.

III.

THREE years afterwards I had the honour of being invited to a Lord Mayor's dinner. I went in fear and trembling, under the apprehension that I might be requested to return thanks for Literature and Art—which nobody had dreamt of asking me to do. The first thing I saw twinkling in the reception-room, outshining all the stars and orders, was Mr. Bedford's cairngorm.

'Ah!' said he, 'did not I say we should meet again?'

'True,' said I, smiling; 'but you mentioned Philippi.'

'So I did; the Lord Mayor is Phillips; that's near enough for prophecy. Let us sit together.'

'I am afraid our places are arranged for us by other people.'

'Then I'll disarrange them.'

His place was about twenty-five away from me; but with a mixture of adroitness and *sangfroid* I never before beheld in man, he managed, when we trooped in to dinner, to change the labels.

He seemed quite at home (as, indeed, he always did), and gave his advice as to what to eat, and drink, and avoid, as though he had been Taster in Ordinary to the Corporation. 'The champagne is good at these sort of entertainments,' he informed me; 'the sherry never. City dinners have only two brands of it.'

'Indeed!' said I. 'What are they?'

'Well, I don't know what name they go under; but I call them (on account of their effect on my constitution) *Nunquam dormio*, and *Nemo me impune lacessit*.'

I was astonished at this flight into the classics, till I called to mind the sources of his inspiration.

'Ah,' said I, 'you still swear by Scotland, then.'

'Well—yes. I have not so many dealings with her just at present, but I may return to my old love, and with renewed devotion.'

I noticed what fine words Dick used, as compared with his old vocabulary, and also that he no longer clipped his words like the waiters; and seeing him so calm and smug in that stately place, I could not help asking (though of course politely) how the deuce he got there.

'Oh, I'm always asked here upon great occasions,' he replied indifferently. 'I represent a principle, you see.'

'A principal? You don't mean Dull or Dolt?'

'Oh dear, no; they have removed to Basinghall Street. I cut them completely out, then sold my own business for a tenner.'

'What, ten pounds?'

'No, no, ten thousand. We always leave the thousands understood in the city in order to save time, which is money. I am here as the representative of Universal Provision. In my establishment on one side of the street, you may procure everything a man requires—from a breech-loader to a pair of breeches; in my establishment on the other side, everything a woman requires, from a petticoat to a pair of pattens. You may get rigged out for India or the North Pole, without moving from my counter.'

'Why, you are surely not the Great Bedford of whom that story is told about the officer who wanted a wife?'

'Certainly I am,' he broke in. 'He had purchased everything for his China outfit, from marmalade to mosquito curtains, and, being in high good humour at his saving of trouble, observed:

"Now, if you could only supply me with a wife——"

"Sir," said I, "there are three hundred young ladies in my

establishment over the way, all of unexceptionable character, and some of them wild to go to China."

'In a word, the matter was arranged in a few days, and I only regret that my Proprietary Chapel, in course of erection at the end of the street, was not sufficiently far advanced for the performance of the ceremony.'

'I suppose even if the captain had been a Mormon,' said I slyly, 'you might have accommodated him in the same way?'

'Well, of course: the commission, however, would have been reduced in consideration of his taking a quantity. You are married yourself, I understand, so I can be of no service in that way to you; but if anything should unfortunately happen in your domestic circle, we perform funerals. I am thinking of laying out a cemetery—here's the prospectus: "Feelings of relatives consulted, and a gravely soil," and "arrangements so combined" (this is important) "that mourners shall not accompany the remains of the wrong parties to their final resting-places, unhappily so common a mistake in crowded cemeteries."'

I was not called upon (as I have said) at that banquet to return thanks for my profession, the City authorities having selected another gentleman, of whom I will say nothing more than that he was by no means the most eminent writer there present; but I had the pleasure of listening to a very eloquent oration by Mr. Richard Bedford in reply to the toast of Universal Provision. A few months afterwards I heard that he had parted with his business to a limited company for what he probably called 'five tenners,' or fifty thousand pounds.

IV.

AFTER the Tower, the Foreign Office, and Westminster Abbey, I suppose the office of the Tartan Annuity Association may be considered the most remarkable edifice in the metropolis. Its colossal size, and its combination of every variety of architecture, make it an object of admiration (at all events in the sense of wonder) to every eye that beholds it, while the statement of its enormous gains (published quarterly) has made every mouth water as it repeats the figures.

As I passed its splendid portals a week ago, I beheld, to my astonishment, Mr. Richard Bedford descending the marble steps with still jaunty tread.

'What,' cried I, 'is it possible that a millionaire like you can have been purchasing an annuity!'

'My good soul,' returned Dick, with a smile of pity, 'I am the sole proprietor of that establishment.'

'Good heavens! Why, if all tales be true, you must be making thirty thousand a year.'

'They are not true,' returned he gravely, 'or at least that one is not. I am making forty thousand.'

'My dear Bedford,' said I (for somehow there are traits in the self-made man that touch the chords—if they are not very delicate—in every heart) 'I congratulate you.'

'Thank you,' said he, 'many people do. But I believe your good wishes are genuine. Step in and have a cigar.' He turned back and ushered me into his private room, which would, in point of magnificence, have suited the Sultan of Turkey or the Khedive of Egypt, except that he had paid ready money for it.

'Yes,' said he, 'we have been rather successful. Nobody, indeed, has yet lived twelve months after buying an annuity of us.'

'Gracious goodness!' I dropped my voice involuntarily. 'Is it antimony, or have you discovered the succession powder?'

'I give you my honour that we never tamper with them,' answered he with frankness. 'Flesh is grass; they are here to-day and gone to-morrow, or nearly so. That is all: we never so much as accelerate the pace. Our luck would doubtless be most marvellous if it *was* luck. But then it's certainty.'

'Certainty? Then you do——'

'No, we don't. Coroners' inquests are, of course, ridiculous, but we should be quite safe even if there was a Public Prosecutor. You remember my old connection with Scotland. It is to bonnie (I forget what her name is in the vernacular) to bonnie Scotland that I am indebted for my prosperity. Let us drain a "Willie waugh"—a glass of sherry—to her good health. Here's to Skye, and Egg, and Mull.'

'What on earth have those wretched islands to do with you now?'

'Everything. I'll tell you the story. Were you ever in Skye?'

'Never.'

'Then don't go. It's a fine place when the sun shines, but at other times—that is, about ninety-nine times out of a hundred—its atmosphere is like its product—wool. The rain there often comes down in sheets, but generally in volumes: out of doors you are soaked with water, indoors you soak yourself—with whisky. Poets and artists rave about it; but it's a most infernal hole. The treasure of the place, however, is its Taishitaraugh.'

'Would you mind saying that again,' said I, 'for I didn't quite catch it?'

'Nobody ever did. I never pronounced it twice the same way myself: the Skye people can, but on the other hand—there, I have written it down for you—they can't read it. It's the gift of second

sight. Did you ever know a man who had it?—who could predict an event, for example, six months in advance?’

I answered modestly enough that I had known people who could smell a dinner a long way off—perhaps a fortnight; but that was the extent of my acquaintance with the modern prophets.

‘Well, in Skye it’s different. There are old fogies who do nothing else but sit at home in a blanket, and see wraiths of all the people in the parish. Everybody knows beforehand exactly when a party is going to die, which is an immense convenience. What happens is this: the gentleman that is booked for the down train—no return ticket—appears to the seer in his winding-sheet. If it’s all over him—no, by the bye, he must see his head—that means it *will* be all over with him within three months. If it’s half-way down, the man will die in six months. If it’s only over his ankles, in about nine. I’ve had the human figure beautifully mapped out, bless you, so that one can tell within a day or two.’

‘You have? Come, my dear Dick, I will allow you have many gifts, but scarcely that of second sight.’

‘No; but *I keep a gentleman that has*. That is why the Tartan Annuity Association never makes a mistake. Instead of a medical officer (who knows nothing) I employ a Highland seer, who, on the question of Life or Death, knows everything. Perhaps you’d like to see him?’

To this I eagerly assented. Mr. Bedford led the way into a handsome apartment, which was the hall of audience for would-be annuitants. At one end of it was a door with a window in it.

‘This is where we keep old Dunny,’ said my host, ‘because he is not very presentable to visitors. When a customer comes in he looks at him through the glass, and at once decides whether we are to take him or not, and on what terms. If we deal at all, however, they are generally very easy ones. How are you, Dunny?’ This observation was addressed to an ancient personage with a long beard, who sat cross-legged on the floor of a small but snug apartment, with a bottle of whisky by his side, and a short black pipe in his mouth. His appearance would have been venerable, had it not suggested drink; his beard would have been white as snow, had it not been so exceedingly dirty. This sage acknowledged his proprietor’s salutation only by an inarticulate grunt, and a blink of his bleary eyes.

‘The poor old buffer understands very little English,’ observed Mr. Bedford in apology for this want of courtesy; ‘and manners in his part of the country—he was hatched in the Isle of Egg, a few miles from Skye—are peculiar. He is, however, very amenable, and lets us do [anything we please with him except wash him.]’

‘Dunny, I have brought a friend of mine to see you.’

The old gentleman murmured something in Gaelic, and began to crook his arms like a pointer that scents game.

‘What on earth is he at?’ cried I apprehensively.

‘Well, he’s going to have a fit—don’t be alarmed—only of inspiration. He thinks you are come about an annuity. When he gets rigid like that, it’s a sign that he is going to see something. If it’s crossbones on your chest, it’s a bad sign; and, unfortunately, no precautions can avert the catastrophe.’

‘I don’t want him to see anything of the sort,’ said I precipitately, and backing out of the room. ‘It’s all nonsense, I’ve no doubt; but I’d rather he didn’t.’

‘Nonsense? Then 40,000*l.* a year is nonsense: come, just try him. If he sees your winding-sheet, as I think by the expression of his eye he will, I’ll pay you 500*l.* a year for a thousand down. He’s not like one of your mediums that is afraid of tests and has no backer to put money on him. It’s a genuine case of Taishitaraugh.’

‘I’ll take your word for it, my dear fellow,’ said I frankly; for I began to feel very ‘uncanny,’ and that the sooner I was away the better. ‘I hope for your sake he’ll never make any mistake.’

‘Oh, it’s the straight tip,’ said Mr. Bedford confidently, as I shook hands with him at the door. ‘He’s a perfect obituary of the Future.’

‘Yes, but it’s about time, is it not, that he should himself be in the obituary? He looks about a hundred already. And what will you do when Dunny goes?’

‘Hush! his name is Dunniewassel Philabeg Macpherson; I only call him Dunny for shortness, and because I am so fond of him. It would never do to let our people here suppose he was addressed with familiarity. As to his dying, that will not affect the prosperity of the Tartan Annuity Association at all. The gift of Taishitaraugh is hereditary, and he has a son in the Isle of Egg that is to be consigned to us the moment the old gentleman sees *himself* in a winding-sheet about *so* high—which will give me, say, three weeks before he pops off.’

The whole affair was certainly most extraordinary. On the one hand, there was Dunny himself; the Tartan Annuity Office with its immense prosperity, which was indisputable, and my friend’s solemn voucher for the truth of his statement. On the other hand, I have not concealed from my readers that Mr. Richard Bedford has a tendency (certainly not contracted in Scotland) to make jokes. Like the philosophic persons who go to the Spirit-rappers, and then write to the newspapers to say they can’t ‘make it out,’ I have stated the facts, and must leave them to the judgment of my readers.

Juliet.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FLORA.

ON that same morning Broadley House lay full in the mid-summer sunshine, whilst its master sat out on the lawn under the shadow of a spreading walnut-tree.

The house was to the full as untidy and dilapidated-looking as of old. There had been no money spent upon house-painters and decorators since the days when little Georgie was the ruling spirit in it and the Squire kept the hounds.

What the old man called a 'lick of paint' had indeed been patched on here and there, just to keep body and soul together, as it were, in the rambling old house; but there had been no thorough overhauling and doing-up of the doors and windows, no repapering of the rooms, no resuscitation of the cracked yellow plaster and stucco, such as undoubtedly the whole place required in every part.

Neither was the garden any better kept and tended than of yore. The evergreens had grown up long and straggly, and, for want of being regularly clipped, had become weedy and thin-looking near their roots; the borders were a tangled mixture of flowers and weeds, with, if anything, a predominance of the latter; whilst the lawn was badly mown and scratched up by the swarm of chickens and dogs which strayed all day long unreproved over it.

They none of them cared for these things at Broadley. Mrs. Travers, indeed, sometimes fretted unavailingly over the untidiness and disorder of her surroundings, and pleaded for another gardener, and suggested the ejection of the live-stock from before the drawing-room windows; but the Squire would only grumble savagely—'Another gardener! pray where's the money to come from, ma'am?' whilst Flora regarded the notion of exiling the dogs from any portion of the domain with such indignant horror, that Mrs. Travers, being quite in the minority, had to smother her remonstrances into an aggrieved and snubbed silence.



FLORA AND THE SQUIRE.

Squire Travers sits in a low chair under the walnut-tree, dressed in a sort of East-Indian planter's costume of nankeen-coloured cotton, with a straw hat on the ground behind him, his spectacles on his nose, and 'The Field' on his knees.

Flat on her back on the grass in front of him lies his daughter Flora—her arms stretched up behind her blonde shiny head, and her grey eyes looking sleepily up at her father from beneath their long dark lashes. Her lithe young figure, in its close-fitting pink cotton dress, gathered in by a simple leather belt at her slender waist, is shown off to full advantage by the *abandon* and ease of her attitude. Two fox terriers and a collie puppy at its most riotous age are tumbling and chasing each other with boisterous mirth round and round her recumbent form, without in any way disturbing her tranquillity; and a whole brood of soft white fluffy chickens, with their solemnly clucking mother at their head, are pecketing their way over the grass not a couple of yards from her head.

Flora has been dozing, but she is wide awake now, and she is wondering when on earth her father will have finished that article on salmon-culture in 'The Field.'

'He can't find it so very absorbing,' she said to herself; 'why doesn't he talk to me instead?' for Miss Flora was a chatterbox, and found enforced silence very hard to bear.

'Papa!' she said at last, seeing that the salmon-culture had been gone through, and a page on cricket-matches just turned to.

'Yes, my love?'

'Papa, that's the third small red spider I've watched come down straight on the top of your dear old bald head.'

'Bless my soul! you don't say so, Flora!' said the Squire nervously, putting up his hand to rub his head, and dropping 'The Field' as he did so.

Flora laughed. 'All rubbish, papa—I only wanted you to stop reading! I'm not going to let you have "The Field" again;' and she took possession of the fallen paper, and placed it safely out of his reach under her own head.

'Now talk to me, papa.'

'Talk! bless the child! what is there to talk of out of the hunting season?'

'Why, there's Vesper's new litter, and Jock's distemper, and whether my mare is to be turned out to grass—and, good gracious, papa,' with a little scornful impatience, 'can you talk of nothing else but the dogs and horses?'

The Squire rubbed his chin thoughtfully—what did the child

want to talk about? he wondered. Georgie had never wished for any more exalted topic of conversation.

'I thought you were so fond of the horses and dogs,' he said reproachfully, looking at his younger daughter.

'So I am, the darlings, I love them!' said Flora, catching at one of the fox terriers as he bounded over her, and kissing his brown head rapturously ere she released his struggling, kicking body.

'So I am, of course; but they are dull to talk about. Do you know of what I have been thinking for the last quarter of an hour?'

'Not in the least.'

'Well, look up into the tree above you,' she said, casting up her clear grey eyes as she spoke; 'look right up into it. Do you see how the branches all bend out from the trunk in regular curves, and how all the leaves lie one over another in a sort of vaulted roof?—and listen, papa, to the sort of murmur the voices of the birds make high up above there: do you remember when we went into Wells Cathedral once, when the choristers were practising somewhere out of sight—and we stared up at the roof till the sound seemed to come from there like angels' voices—don't you remember how lovely it was? Now, doesn't looking up into the walnut-tree remind you of the roof of Wells Cathedral, papa?'

Mr. Travers had done as he was told, and leaned his neck back till it ached, to look up straight above his head. He listened attentively to all his daughter said, and then looked down again at her with a puzzled, bewildered face. What could he make of a girl who said a tree was like a cathedral?

'Upon my soul, Flora, I suppose I am very stupid,' he said, almost humbly; 'but I don't see how a green tree can be like Wells Cathedral!'

'Don't you, papa? oh, I see it so plainly,' she answered, with her eyes still above his head, continuing the drift of her own fanciful imaginations. 'I can see all the frettings and carvings of the groined roof, and the capitals of the columns with leaves and berries and arabesques, and there is one little grinning demon's head, yes, and there is another, and another too—those are the bosses, and then a whole legion of little saints and fiends mixed up together under that arch—ah! cruel little puff of wind! it has blown them all away.'

The Squire had looked up again, half fancying the things must be there, since Flora saw them, and angry at his own stupidity for not doing so too, and then he looked down again at her in perplexity.

‘What queer things the child has got in her head,’ he said, half to himself. ‘Is it from Wattie, I wonder, that you’ve got all these crazy notions, Miss Flora?’

A faint flush swept over the girl’s face as her father spoke, and she half raised herself from the ground.

‘Never mind all the nonsense I talk, papa. I like saying aloud all the odd things that come into my head—perhaps I ought not to expect you to understand—but hush! is not that the sound of carriage wheels coming up the drive? Yes, it is a carriage; fancy visitors at this hour in the morning—why, papa!’ springing up gladly, ‘it is the Sotherne carriage, and there is Juliet inside it,’ and she ran eagerly forward; whilst the Squire, stooping to pick up his ‘Field’ and his straw hat, followed her more leisurely.

‘There must be something wrong in the head of a child that sees cathedrals up in the trees,’ he said to himself again, with a puzzled pucker on his old forehead.

‘Anything wrong with Cis—is my dear boy ill?’ cried Mrs. Travers, coming anxiously out of the front door to meet her daughter-in-law.

Mothers-in-law have a way of thinking that nothing else on earth can occupy the time or thoughts of their sons’ wives excepting only those sons, who to the mother are such demi-gods, and to the wife often such very commonplace and faulty personages.

‘Nothing is wrong with Cis that I know of,’ answered Juliet, smiling, as she alighted from the carriage; ‘he was quite well this morning;’ and a little pang went through her heart, at the thought that no one asked or cared whether anything was wrong with her: a pang which, an instant after, she accused herself of foolishness for feeling. ‘How are you, dear Mr. Travers? can you spare me Flora? I have come to carry her off. Flora, do you think you can pack up your things and be ready to go back with me in a couple of hours? Never mind if your wardrobe is not quite what it should be—we are not going to a desert; there are plenty of shops in London, you know.’

‘O Juliet! do you really mean it?’ exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands in delight, whilst visions of London, of balls and theatres and flower shows, dreamt of often but never experienced, flashed through her mind and flushed her fair young face with a bright rose tint.

‘Flora is too young to go out in London,’ said her mother,—‘a child not seventeen yet.’

‘Indeed, mamma, I am!’ interrupted the girl eagerly; ‘I was seventeen last Monday—don’t you remember? Oh! do let me go!’

‘I think she had much better stay at home. I have no opinion

of turning girls' heads with vanity and frivolity, before they are out of the school-room,' said the mother severely.

But the father was thinking of the cathedral up in the walnut-tree. High time something should be done to drive such fanciful notions out of the child's mind!

'Let her go, let her go,' he said. 'What's life to a girl out of the hunting season, with no one but a couple of old folks to talk to? She only gets a pack of nonsense and poetry into her head. You may go with your sister-in-law, my dear; go and pack up your frocks: and, Juliet, come in and have some lunch.'

Mrs. Travers sighed resignedly, as Flora executed a pirouette of delight, and fled indoors with her face all aglow with pleasure to pack up 'her frocks.'

So Juliet carried off her young sister-in-law to Grosvenor Street. Was it, perhaps, that she needed that pure young presence to defend her against herself?—that she dreaded to return alone to all the storms and temptations of her life—that she required a companion, some one to be with her and stand by her daily, a some one who should be quite a different sort of person from Rosa Dalmaine?

Possibly, for with the events of the last two days there had grown up a great terror in Juliet Travers's heart, a mortal fear, a terrible dread of herself. Whilst she had believed that she was unloved and forgotten, she had been indeed miserable, but she had been safe; but with the knowledge which the discovery of that old letter had brought her, that she was not unloved, not scorned, not forgotten, every safeguard of pride and duty behind which she had formerly entrenched herself seemed to be crumbling away.

By the very joy that the knowledge of Hugh Fleming's love gave her, she realised the greatness of her danger. And now her secret was no longer her own—to her very face her enemy, the woman whose selfish cruelty had already ruined her life, had accused her of loving a man not her husband, and had worded her accusation in coarse uncompromising words, that had possibly scared and terrified her more than all her own most heart-searching thoughts. As this woman had wrecked her past, might she not also equally wreck her future?

With a shudder of terror, she turned eagerly from her own thoughts, with a certain sense of security, to the girl who sat beside her in the railway carriage, and who was chattering gaily of the unknown pleasures and delights which London can contain for sorrowless seventeen.

Flora was in fairyland. The fields and woods and villages, as they flew by in the deepening summer twilight, seemed to her a

flower-bordered pathway, that was to lead her to the summit of all her dreams.

She had never been to London before, excepting for an occasional day's shopping, usually including a visit to the dentist, of which she had anything but pleasant reminiscences, and she had never been to a ball in her life. Flora was neither worldly nor frivolous, but she had that craving for enjoyment and pleasure which all young girls naturally possess, and which is so often unwisely checked and smothered away as a sin by mothers who believe themselves to be honestly doing their duty, but who seem to have entirely forgotten their own young days.

Why, in the name of all that is innocent and good, should not girls enjoy to the utmost their first hey-day of youth, when they are heart-whole and frolicsome as the young lambs in the cowslip-covered fields! God knows that heart-burnings, and disappointments, and weariness of mind, come soon enough to most women!

And beyond and above this natural pleasure and excitement in the change that had come into her life, there was hidden away somewhere in the depths of Flora's heart a certain joyous delight in the thought of something very specially happy, which might in all probability come across her path in London.

Now, this something had a tangible name—and the name of it was Walter Ellison.

Flora Travers was not at all 'in love' with our old friend Wattie; at least, if you had accused her of such a thing, she would have laughed at you. Wattie was to her as an elder brother, a home authority, a somebody to be at times teased and lorded over, and at other times admiringly listened to and meekly obeyed. She had had very little sisterly intercourse with her own brother—indeed, she knew very little of him at all; and the little she did know was so uncongenial to her own nature, that she could hardly be said to be fond of him.

But in Wattie, Flora had realised, as she thought, all her notions of fraternal affection, and perhaps a something more besides of which she was hardly aware.

When he came down to Broadley from Saturday to Monday, an event which had happened less often now than in the first years after poor Georgie's death, Flora ran gladly to meet him at the front door, which in opening to admit his handsome figure seemed to her to let in a flood of life and sunshine along with it.

When he talked to her she listened to him patiently, when he lent her books she devoured them eagerly; but when, as frequently happened, he gave her gentle fraternal scoldings and wise little bits

of advice, she laughed at him scornfully, and told him to mind his own business, and then after he was gone repented in tears, and strove to do all he wished.

And Wattie loved the girl with all his heart and soul: not as he had loved Georgie, with the fervour and passion of a boy's first love, but soberly and gravely, and none the less deeply that he had hitherto suppressed every outward demonstration of it.

This transferring of his heart from his dead first love to her young sister was not done all in a minute.

Wattie had been attracted to her first because of the reflected light of his affection to Georgie, because she was so heart-broken at her death, and perhaps still more because of her great personal likeness to her sister. But by degrees, as time went on, he grew to love her for herself alone, and to love her with a totally different and distinct love from that he had felt for Georgie.

Not for her sweetness or gentleness or unselfishness could anyone love Flora Travers. None of these things had she in common with Georgie; their love of riding and of all healthy outdoor occupations, and their fair shining hair alone, had made the sisters alike.

Flora was wilful and self-indulgent and spoilt, as only the younger child of a doting old father can be. She asserted her own opinions, spoke out her own views, contradicted her elders, and laughed at them to their faces, with a boldness which horrified Wattie, whilst at the same time it attracted him strangely.

She was so saucy, and so conscious of her own power, and so pretty with it all, that it would have required a stronger minded man than Wattie to have resisted her. And then Flora had a serious side to her volatile nature, a vivid imagination, a refined mind, and the warmest heart in the world.

Walter Ellison was no longer the impetuous lover who had wooed poor Georgie five years ago. He knew very well that the Squire would as joyfully give him his younger daughter, as he had jealously withheld the elder from him in days gone by. But Wattie did not mean to take advantage of that knowledge. The child should not be taken unawares; she should have time to look about her, and see other men, and learn her own heart thoroughly before he asked her for it. Meanwhile Wattie stuck to the Bar and worked in earnest. He had long ago given up the idea of rising to fame and fortune by the pursuit of the Fine Arts, and opportunity having on one occasion given him a brief with which he had made a slight success, he buckled down bravely to court the legal muse, and by this time was earning a small but steadily increasing *income* by his untiring energy and perseverance.

He did not go down very often to Broadley now. He fancied that the Squire's hints and nods and winks had made Flora slightly conscious and confused in his presence, and he did not want her to be driven into considering him as a lover, or even as an admirer, by the well-meant insinuations of anybody.

If she loved him, she must do so of her own accord, he said to himself, or else not at all.

And yet, all the time he plodded away at his daily work, he was not constantly thinking that he was working and toiling for her. Indirectly, for her—yes, if she would have him; but if not, then for himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FLORA IN LONDON.

THE whirl of London life went on—dinners, balls, evening parties all night, flower-shows, afternoon parties, visits, and shops all day—and no one among all the gay crowd of matrons and maids caught the spirit of the life more quickly, or entered more thoroughly into every passing pleasure, than did our little friend Flora Travers.

In three weeks Flora had developed from a girl into a woman; the hot-bed life of London excitement drew out of her things that had before lain dormant within her, and which it would have taken years of the quiet humdrum existence of Broadley House to have brought to light.

For in three weeks she had learnt the secret of her own attractiveness. She had gone to her first ball with a thousand tremors and misgivings. As she had followed Juliet up the flower-bedecked staircase, and had encountered all the gay couples of men and women coming down it—a quadrille was just over—talking and laughing and nodding to each other with the ease of perfect confidence in themselves and in their own enjoyment, her beating heart had sunk down in dismay.

She knew no one. Was it likely that she would get any partners? Who would care to dance with a girl so young and so ignorant of everything connected with London life as she was? And to sit still and watch other girls dance and enjoy themselves was, Flora felt, more than the fortitude of seventeen could bear. She knew she should disgrace herself and cry. Oh, how heartily she longed to be able to turn back and fly down that bright thronged staircase, jump into the dark carriage again, and be carried home to bed before the dreadful misery which she anticipated should overtake her!

And then, just as these agonised thoughts were at their climax, somebody introduced her to her first partner :

‘Miss Travers, let me introduce Captain Hartley.’

And an unknown somebody, whom she had not courage to look up at, straightway whirled her away in his arms.

Jack Hartley was wondering what on earth he should say to his partner. The lady of the house had asked him if he minded dancing with a very young girl, who knew nobody ; and Jack, who was good-natured, pulled a grimace and submitted to be victimised.

‘She is pretty, at all events,’ was his first thought, adding, after a dozen steps or so down the room, ‘and dances well, too, by Jove ! Well, I’d better keep her at it, for I suppose she can’t say a word.’

And keep her at it he did, until his own breath was utterly gone, and he had to come to a stop to recruit it, whilst Flora stood fresh and cool as a summer flower by his side.

‘Well, I must say something to her,’ thought Jack, when his violent panting was somewhat abated, ‘so here goes for the Row or the Royal Academy for the nine hundred and sixteenth time this week !’ and he was just clearing his throat to open fire upon these interesting topics when a clear sweet voice by his side said :

‘I am afraid you will find me very stupid.’

‘Stupid !’ said Jack, opening his blue eyes in amazement, but feeling rather guilty the while ; ‘what an extraordinary idea ! what can make you think so ?’

‘Girls are always considered stupid when they are quite young. I know you were cudgelling your brains to think of something civil to say to me.’

‘What a witch you are !’ said Jack, laughing at being so cleverly found out, and beginning to notice that his companion was even more than pretty. ‘Well, I won’t deny the soft impeachment ; but I see now that I was blind—you are not like ordinary girls at all.’

‘Perhaps not,’ said Flora, lowering her glance a little under her partner’s admiring gaze, ‘but this is my first ball.’

‘Everybody must have a beginning,’ said Captain Hartley, with reassuring condescension. ‘So it is your first ball, is it ? Well, and how do you like it ?’

‘Oh, not at all, as yet,’ said Flora, with ingenuous earnestness.

Jack Hartley burst out laughing. ‘Upon my word, Miss Travers, you are not complimentary, considering that I am “as yet” your only partner !’

‘That is just it—I mean,’ correcting herself with a blush, ‘I don’t mean to be rude, of course,—but it is because you *are* my

only partner. I know you will be the only one,' she added, looking melancholy.

'Do you mean that I am to dance with you the whole evening?' said Jack, more and more amused.

'Oh, no, no! how very stupid you are!' cried Flora, quite distressed; 'no, I mean of course that no one else will.'

'Why on earth should you imagine that such an awful state of imbecility is going to befall the whole of the male sex here present?'

'Because I am seventeen, and I don't know a single soul in the room,' answered the girl with a demure solemnity that was almost tragic.

Jack laughed heartily as he passed his arm round her waist, and as he carried her off again among the dancers he whispered, with his long moustache almost brushing against her smooth fair plaits,

'You little goose, you dance divinely; you are lovely, and, better still, you know how to flirt already. Take my word for it, before the end of the evening you will be queen of the room.'

And he was right. Before the evening was over Flora had more partners than she knew what to do with, and was lording it over them with all the saucy impudence of a young sovereign.

It is little to be wondered at that in three weeks' time there was no longer only one man reigning supreme in Flora Travers's imagination.

Wattie Ellison was no more the dominant influence of her life. Instead of him, dozens of young men of all shades and kinds hustled and jostled each other through her thoughts night and day, one succeeding the other with surprising rapidity. Captain Hartley, with his blue eyes and long moustache, and with the privileged freedom of old friendship which that little talk at her first ball had empowered him to assume, was perhaps the foremost and most constant on her list of admirers—at all events, he attracted her fancy and touched her vanity more than did any of the others.

Captain Hartley was a young man who understood women and the art of pleasing them thoroughly. He had studied them at all ages and in all moods from his boyhood upwards; he understood when to pursue them and when to stand aloof, when to cajole and when to appear indifferent, when to gaze with bold admiration and when to glance covertly with feigned timidity—he could be humble with them at times; but, above all, he knew when and how to be audacious; for what woman at heart is not attracted by audacity, though she must perforce feign to resent it? 'Faint heart never

won fair lady,' is the truest proverb that ever was written concerning the much hackneyed subject of love-making. In a word, Jack Hartley was a finished flirt; moreover, he was a cavalry officer, in a crack Lancer regiment, and Flora was at that age when the military element makes a profound impression on the female imagination. When one morning she had been taken down to some field-day at Aldershot, and had seen him trot by at the head of his troop, a brilliant vision of blue cloth and gold lace and shining accoutrements glittering in the sunshine, little Flora gave in at once and believed herself, for that day at least, to be really and truly desperately in love with the fascinating captain.

Meanwhile, Wattie Ellison was not unmindful of what was going on, but he knew the child better than she knew herself.

He had met her at several balls, and, although he had never danced himself since the death of his first love, he had been partly pleased and partly pained to stand aside in some sheltering doorway to watch Flora.

He was pleased that she was so happy and so much admired, and to see her looking so lovely; but he was pained to note how much all the admiration and flattery engrossed her, and to see how little part he himself had in her present life. Especially did he dislike the very decided flirtation which Flora was carrying on with handsome Jack Hartley. Wattie well knew that Jack was the kind of man who never meant anything serious by attentions to young ladies, and he was terribly afraid lest Flora should allow herself to get too fond of the handsome lancer. He wondered that Juliet did not see and guard against the danger for her young sister-in-law; but Juliet, although she zealously performed all the arduous duties of chaperone, was possibly too much engrossed by her own troubles to notice very particularly how often Flora danced or sat out with one partner; and as long as the girl was well dressed and enjoying herself, she did not, perhaps, think her supervision over her need go further.

One evening, it was a day or two before the Eton and Harrow cricket-match, Juliet and Flora were together in a box at the Opera; for the moment no one was with them, and the curtain had gone down for the first act.

The house was crowded, and they were both looking down at the glittering *parterre* of stalls below them.

'Look, Juliet, at that fat old woman in a pink silk turban—did you ever see such an object?' said Flora, peering down through her opera-glasses. 'Why, I do declare it's old Mrs. Rollick! I never saw her come out in that style before—and there is Arabella with her, in a low white tarlatan dress. Well, if I was thirty, with

a scraggy neck and a couple of broomsticks for arms, I wouldn't appear in a low dress like that!' she added, with all the severity and disgust which the consciousness of undeniable youth and beauty can give.

'You are seventeen, and have pretty little plump shoulders,' said Juliet, smiling. 'If you are unmarried at thirty, and have grown scraggy—'

'If!' interrupted Flora, with a scornful little toss of her pretty chin.

Juliet laughed, and then sighed. She too had been looking eagerly down amongst the crowd below them—longing and yearning for a sight of Hugh Fleming.

Since that day when the truth about that old letter had been spoken between them, he had not once been to her house, and she had only twice seen him, once in a crowded ball-room, and once out-of-doors. On both occasions merely a bow had passed between them.

She was perfectly conscious that he kept aloof from her purposely; and although she fully appreciated his motives and honoured him for them, and though she acknowledged the wisdom of his avoiding her for both their sakes, yet, womanlike, she could not help reproaching him, and fretted angrily against his desertion.

'If he loved me more, he could not keep away,' she said to herself, whereas in her heart she knew that it was the very greatness of his love that made him keep away.

'There is Wattie,' said Juliet, looking down through her opera-glasses.

'Yes, I see,' said Flora, as if she did not care at all, although she had seen him a long time ago.

And presently Wattie came up into their box.

'What is this about your going to Lord's on Friday?' he said, sitting down by Flora, with perhaps a little too much of the elder brother in his tone.

'What about it?' said Flora defiantly, scenting opposition before it came.

'Why, I hear you are going on the drag of the 99th Lancers. I hope you won't think of it, Flora,—and without your sister-in-law, too.'

'Not think of it, indeed! As if I was going to give it up! Why on earth should I not go? I am going to be chaperoned by two married women, Mrs. Dalmaine and the Colonel's wife. You talk as if I was going off all by myself on the sly. Juliet has given me leave to go, haven't you, Juliet?'

'Given you leave to go where, Flora?' asked Juliet, rousing herself with an effort as the girl turned eagerly to her.

'I was objecting to Flora's going by herself to the cricket-match on the 99th drag, Mrs. Travers,' put in Wattie.

'Mrs. Dalmaine is going to take her; I have been engaged myself long ago to go to Lady Caroline Skinflint's carriage, and I did not see how Flora was to go at all, so I was rather glad when she got such a pleasant invitation—how do you do, Lord George?' she added, turning to Lord George Mannersley, who at that moment entered the box and sat down beside her.

Flora turned triumphantly to Wattie.

'There!' she said, 'you see Juliet does not mind my going.'

'But I do very much, Flora; if you will give it up to please me, I will take you myself.'

'How?' she said, temporising a little.

'I will call for you in a hansom directly after lunch and take you up.'

'After lunch! well, and when there what should we do?'

'Why, walk about,' said Wattie a little doubtfully, conscious possibly that his plan was hardly an equivalent for the 99th drag and the champagne luncheon.

'Thank you, sir,' said Flora, with a toss of her head, 'I prefer my own arrangements.'

At that moment Captain Hartley came into the box.

'I have just looked in, Miss Travers, in case I don't see you before Friday, to say that I will call for you in my phaeton at ten o'clock, if that is not too early. Mrs. Dalmaine will wait for you inside the door—I have just seen her—will that suit you?'

'Oh, perfectly, thank you, Captain Hartley; it will be delightful!' cried Flora, with a little more *empressement* in her tone than if Wattie had not been standing behind her chair.

'Very well, then, let us settle it so. We have nothing to do now but hope for fine weather; and of course, Miss Travers, you will wear Eton colours?'

'I will see about that,' said Flora, who had a new pale-blue bonnet just come home from the milliner's on purpose.

Jack Hartley bent over her chair and whispered something to her which Wattie did not hear.

She looked down, smiled, fidgeted with her fan, and then looked up with a sudden flash of her grey eyes into his.

'Well, for *your* sake I will try,' she said sentimentally.

Wattie ground his teeth together in a fury, whilst Captain Hartley, looking perhaps a little surprised at her manner, took his leave of both ladies.

'Good night,' said Wattie shortly, immediately after, and went out without shaking hands, with a face like a thunder-cloud.

And Flora pretended to listen to Patti, and felt a good deal elated by her small triumph, and a little bit sorry too.

What Jack Hartley had whispered to her had been very innocent indeed.

'That dreadful Rollick woman and her daughter have just been asking me to give them lunch on our drag at Lord's. I wish you would tell them the wheels are rotten and will give way, or something alarming; do try and keep them away,' was what he had said,—and Flora's words had answered him perfectly; but her manner had been intended to make Wattie believe that something sentimental had been said about the Eton colours, for she did not forget that Wattie was a Harrow man.

Old or young, fair or plain, in their dealings with men who love them, women are at heart all the same. Only the different circumstances of their lives make the different shades of their character in this respect.

Down at Broadley House, among the horses and dogs, and under the shady walnut-trees on the lawn, no little maid had been more simple-hearted and more free from every shade of coquetry than was Flora Travers; but up in London, courted and flattered and sought after, she had already learnt all the thousand and one trickeries by which a woman exasperates an honest lover to the verge of despair, and often half breaks her own heart by the way. What can be the pleasure of it?

The natural feminine result of Miss Flora's naughtiness was that she lay awake crying all night; and had Wattie only come again in the morning, she would have given up the cricket-match without a pang. But Wattie did not dream of coming.

Flora was in the depths of penitence—she would at all events do something to show her good intentions.

'Juliet,' she said diplomatically, 'that bonnet is hideous! I really cannot wear it to-morrow. I think I must change it.'

'I thought it suited you so well, Flora; why should you want to change it?'

'I have taken the greatest horror of it. I positively cannot bear the sight of it!'

'You funny child! I liked it so much; but if you wish, we will take it back this afternoon.'

And when the two ladies reached the shop with the rejected bonnet, to Juliet's astonishment, Flora insisted on having a dark-blue one.

'Changed your colours, Flora! Why, what is that for?'

'Light blue is horribly unbecoming to me,' said Flora, blushing guiltily.

'On the contrary, I think it is dark blue that does not suit you—but please yourself, child,' said her sister-in-law, with a smile, becoming aware for the first time of some romance that was taking place in the girl's life.

Flora was trying on a dark-blue bonnet. It did not suit her—her complexion was too pale. She was perfectly conscious of the fact, but stuck to her resolution with the heroism of an early martyr.

'He shall see that I can even make myself look a fright to please him,' she thought, and aloud she said, 'This one will do very well.' The dark-blue bonnet was paid for and carried off, and Flora felt that she had given Wattie every reparation within her power. All day long she longed for him to come, or at least for a note from him. If only he would offer again to take her himself, how gladly she felt she would give up the glories of the 99th drag and the champagne lunch, to say nothing of Captain Hartley's phaeton in the morning, to go with him humbly in a hansom! But Wattie made no sign, and Flora did not feel strong-minded enough to give up the expedition altogether. Towards evening she grew angry and impatient with him again.

'He is jealous, simply jealous,' she said to herself. 'Captain Hartley is much pleasanter, he never makes himself disagreeable for nothing. I shall certainly go now. Besides, it is too late to put him off. I almost wish I had not changed the bonnet.'

CHAPTER XXX.

A VISIT FROM A BRIDE.

ON a blazing morning, some four or five days before the London world thought it necessary to go mad in light and dark blue over the schoolboys' cricket-match, a heavily laden four-wheel cab might have been seen drawn up lazily in front of one of the stuccoed porticoes in Lower Eccleston Street.

On the top of the cab were two large dress boxes, a portmanteau, and a tin box, all marked very strikingly with the letter L in red and white paint. Out of the cab there emerged, when the cabman opened the door, first, a small bird-cage containing a canary, secondly, a larger ditto containing a grey parrot, thirdly, a wickerwork dog-kennel containing a Maltese poodle—which latter animal enlivened the noonday tranquillity of the street by uttering sundry dismal and jackal-like howls as soon as he was deposited on the pavement.

After the live stock, were handed out a lady's dressing-case, a gentleman's dressing-bag, a bundle of umbrellas, and a rug; and then came a middle-aged female in a rusty black silk dress, and with a severe cast of countenance, who proceeded to hand out a shapeless bundle of muslin flounces and blue ribbons, who descended cautiously to the ground and looked timidly around her.

'It's very trying for a bride to come home all alone like this, isn't it, Dorcas? And to think of its being broad daylight too, with everybody to stare at me in the open street.'

'What is the heye of man?' said the female addressed, sternly fixing her own on the only male observer of the proceedings, a one-legged crossing-sweeper at the corner, who was idly wondering if so many packages would mean 'a job;' 'the heye of man signifies little, marm; reflect upon the judgment-day when all our sins will be revealed.' And it was with those cheerful words sounding in her ears that Mrs. Lamplough passed the threshold of her new home.

Mrs. Blair had not allowed many days to elapse after her stormy interview with her step-daughter before securing to herself, by all the strength of marriage bonds, the various good things which she imagined would fall to her lot as the lawful wife of the Rev. Daniel Lamplough.

No sooner had Juliet virtually ejected her from Sotherne than she became possessed with a mortal terror lest her lover, who was now her only refuge, should slip through her fingers also, and she be left destitute and homeless.

With many blushes and much simpering shyness she communicated to her dearest Daniel her wish to be married soon—sooner than she had originally intended—so very soon, indeed, that even that worthy man, who was not troubled with many bashful sentiments, was a little bit surprised.

She was never well at Sotherne in the summer, she said. She wanted an immediate change of air—it fretted her to think she was keeping her Daniel away from his parish and his poor people, who must miss his ministrations so sorely; it would be nice, too, to be married quietly, without any fuss; indeed, in her delicate position, it would be more seemly; and then, they would get a little glimpse of the world before the London season was quite over; and as to her clothes, why, she really wanted very little, and could get everything much better in town after she was married.

Mr. Lamplough was only too pleased at the turn which his courtship was thus suddenly taking. Truth to say, he was getting very tired of the love-making; the lady once secured, he was anxious to get back to his ordinary life, and was thoroughly sick

of winding Mrs. Blair's wools and carrying her shawls, and of making her pretty speeches all day long. It was time, he considered, that all these follies should come to an end. A certain amount of philandering he had always known to be requisite and desirable on these occasions, but he was beginning to think that he had had pretty well enough of it, so that he hailed with joy this sudden fancy of hers to be married in a week, and congratulated himself on having found a woman who was sensible enough to forego the extravagant delights of a large trousseau, and who did not mind walking into church arm-in-arm with him, without a wedding party and without a wedding breakfast.

'My Maria,' he said, with that ineffable sweetness which always characterised his language to the lady of his affections, 'you are the fairest ornament of your sex; your goodness and your solicitude for my happiness positively overwhelm me;' and then he hummed and hawed, and said something about the settlements.

As to that, Mrs. Blair said it would be all very easily arranged. She would send for Mr. Bruce, who had always managed her affairs, and he would come down and settle everything, and if Mr. Lamplough would write any directions he might wish to give to him, she would do the same, and he would bring down the necessary documents with him all ready to be signed, so that there need be no delay on that score. And then she added tenderly,

'And you know, Daniel, that everything I have is yours.'

And Mr. Lamplough murmured 'My angel!' with a fondness which was not altogether assumed, considering the circumstances.

But whether it was by accident or by design, certain it is that Mr. Bruce's letter to the bridegroom elect did not give him the least idea of the true state of the case. In all probability Mr. Bruce imagined that the amount of Mrs. Blair's fortune was known to him; at any rate, it was only when the family solicitor arrived at Sotherne with the settlements all drawn out in his pocket, the very afternoon before the wedding-day, that Mr. Lamplough found out, to his horror and dismay, that his 'rich widow,' as he had always fondly imagined her to be, possessed three thousand pounds of her own, and five hundred pounds per annum settled upon her for her lifetime,—which upon her death lapsed again to the Sotherne estate, upon which it was chargeable.

Certainly Mrs. Blair had done her utmost for her lover, for her own three thousand pounds were to be settled absolutely upon him. He could find no fault with her; to the best of her power, she had behaved fairly, and even generously, to him; she had not cheated him nor lied unto him, she had never told him she was rich, nor misled him concerning her fortune in any way. It was entirely from

the gossip of other people, from the style in which she lived, and from his own misguided suppositions, that this fatal misconception had arisen.

And it was now too late. Mr. Lamplough had no overweening sense of honour, neither was he a man of any refinement of feeling; but to cast off a lady on the very eve of his marriage-day, because she had not so much money as he had imagined her to have, was a thing which even he felt to be an impossibility.

So Mr. and Mrs. Lamplough were duly married at Sotherne Church the following morning, and the only change in their programme was, that, instead of a week's honeymoon, two days at the Red Lion at Henley, on their way to London, was all that Mr. Lamplough considered necessary under the altered circumstances of his marriage.

Some days before the wedding there arrived from London, as lady's-maid to the bride, a stern-looking middle-aged woman, Mrs. Dorcas Mullins by name. She was engaged and sent down by Miss Lamplough, the Rev. Daniel's maiden sister, with a first-rate character; indeed, she was well known to her, having already lived with several members of the Lamplough family.

Mrs. Blair did not fancy the austere and puritanical aspect of the waiting-maid her future sister-in-law had chosen for her; but Mr. Lamplough having stated that she was a God-fearing woman, and came of a pious family, and further that it was his very particular wish that his dearest Maria should engage her, she did not venture to make any more objections to her.

Dorcas was undoubtedly a good servant and understood her duties, so that Mrs. Blair could find no reasonable fault with her, but she felt vaguely that her new maid was a spy upon her actions, and that Mr. Lamplough had chosen her to be a sort of gaoler over her. When the bride and bridegroom arrived at Paddington Station from Henley, Mr. Lamplough said to his wife:

'My love, will you go home with Dorcas?—I have a little business to do in the City, and shall be with you during the course of the afternoon.'

His smooth-toned, gentle words left no room for rebellion. Mrs. Lamplough felt it hard to be left to go to her new home alone, but already she had learnt that she was no longer a free agent, and that her husband was not a man whom she could dare to disobey, even concerning the smallest trifle.

So, accompanied only by her sour-faced scripture-quoting maid—a sad change from the voluble, worldly little Ernestine, whom her mistress already bitterly regretted—the three-days' wife arrived, as has been seen, at the unknown house of her new husband.

No. 160 Lower Eccleston Street was a large and well-built corner house, but when you went into it you felt much as if you were entering a family vault.—Heavy mahogany furniture, black with age, faded flock papers of antediluvian designs, dingy threadbare carpets, and curtains out of which the sun had long ago taken every vestige of their original colour, and reduced them in every room to a uniform rusty hue; a great gaunt drawing-room, from whose misty ceiling depended a monstrous and hideous chandelier done up in a yellow muslin bag; old-fashioned console tables with white marble tops surmounted by mirrors, whose gilt frames of scrolled and floriated designs were also swathed in yellow muslin; a large round table in the middle of the front drawing-room, another a size smaller in the middle of the back drawing-room, with red Utrecht velvet covers on each of them; a few hard straight-backed sofas and chairs, all in red Utrecht also, scattered at wide intervals over the room; a white alabaster clock, with a blackened ormolu cupid on the top of it, on the mantelpiece, flanked on either side by two large and extremely hideous cut-glass lustres, completed the decoration of this cheerful apartment. The rest of the house was in the same style. All was good indeed, but heavy, ponderous, and frightful. There was not a little table, nor a light chair, nor a scrap of prettiness, from the cellar to the garret.

Poor Mrs. Lamplough, who had been accustomed to all the feminine knicknacks of the day in the pretty rooms at Sotherne, looked about her in dismay. Something must of course be done to improve all this; everything ugly must be swept away, and all sorts of new-fashioned things must be substituted—but meanwhile how depressing, how appalling, was the present state of things!

When Mr. Lamplough came home he found the furniture in the drawing-room all dragged about from one side of the room to the other, the yellow muslin torn off the chandelier and the gilt frames of the mirrors, and his wife standing in the midst of the confusion jotting down sundry items with a pencil and paper.

The reverend gentleman stopped in amazement in the doorway. ‘My love, what *are* you doing? Are you pushing up the furniture for a carpet dance, or are you taking an inventory to let the house?’

‘Neither,’ she answered, a little sharply; ‘I am only putting down what things I shall want to make this room decently habitable, and what old rubbish must be sold.’

‘New things!’ said Mr. Lamplough, with a little short laugh. ‘I don’t quite know, my dearest Maria, where the new things are to come from. I shall not provide the money for any new thing:

do you feel inclined to do so?' It was the first time he had alluded to the lack of money which he so sorely repented in his bride, and, possibly feeling not altogether guiltless of deception in the matter, Mrs. Lamplough bit her lip and was silent.

'Here, Florizella!' he exclaimed, addressing somebody behind him, and for the first time Mrs. Lamplough discovered that he had not come in alone. A great puffing and panting was heard on the last steps of the staircase and in the landing outside, and then the individual addressed as 'Florizella' waddled, I cannot say walked, into the room.

A short woman, little more than four feet high, and very nearly as broad as she was tall, a very fat red face, and fierce-looking little brown curls which stuck out stiffly from under a salmon-coloured bonnet, very large hands arrayed in grey cotton gloves, and very large feet in black cloth boots that stuck out conspicuously from under her short green silk gown—such was the outer appearance of the woman who answered to the poetical name of Florizella, suggestive of shepherdesses and flowery meads and all sorts of summer blossoms.

'Here, Florizella!' cried her brother, 'here is Mrs. Lamplough talking of selling my furniture already!'

'Selling the furniture!' repeated Miss Florizella in dismay, in the cracked wheezy voice which extreme obesity and constant attacks of asthma had made habitual to her. 'Selling *my mother's* furniture! gracious heavens!' and from the sour expression in Miss Lamplough's face it did not appear that she was likely to be over-affectionate to her new sister-in-law.

But Mrs. Lamplough did not intend to let herself be snubbed by her new relative. She laid down her pencil and advanced to meet her. 'I suppose this is your sister, Daniel,' she said, 'although you have not introduced her to me. You find me all in confusion, my dear Florizella; it would have been better to have deferred your visit a little; still, I am very pleased to see you.'

Miss Lamplough submitted to be kissed with a sulky grunt, and offensively repeated some remark concerning her mother's furniture, and what was wrong with it.

'Oh, as to the furniture,' said Mrs. Lamplough with a very sweet smile, 'of course, if dear Daniel values it for his mother's sake, I should not dream of selling any of it; but you must confess that it is very ugly, and in the worst possible taste. But perhaps we could not expect any great refinement from her, poor woman, could we?'

Now, the late Mrs. Lamplough had, at an early period of her career, been engaged in the useful but homely occupation of dis-

pensing butter and eggs behind the counter in her husband's shop in Southampton Row, and Miss Lamplough, who was always painfully alive to the humiliating fact, felt the sting of the allusion and was silenced.

Mr. Lamplough, who had been listening to the little passage of arms between the ladies of his family with an amused smile, not altogether displeased to find that his elegant wife had the best of it, here called out to Dorcas, who happened to be passing upstairs, to send the housemaid into the drawing-room to move the furniture back into its place again, and to replace the yellow muslin bag on the chandelier.

And thus ended Mrs. Lamplough's fruitless attempt at beautifying and reforming her new home.

It so happened that Juliet Travers did not go to the cricket-match at all. After Flora had gone off in high and somewhat artificial spirits in Captain Hartley's phaeton, Juliet had received a note from Lady Caroline Skinflint announcing her inability to go in consequence of a bad sick-headache, so she resigned herself not at all unwillingly to a quiet day alone.

Great was her astonishment when, early in the afternoon, a visitor was announced—none other than Mrs. Lamplough.

Mrs. Lamplough, arrayed in lace and satin and gorgeous apparel, and a wonderful Parisian bonnet, came towards her with outstretched lavender-kid hands, and with the most delighted and *empressé* manner, as if nothing unpleasant had ever passed between them.

'My dearest Juliet! how fortunate I am to find you alone, and how nice to think of having a chat with you, my dear girl! I knew you would not wish me to stand upon ceremony with you; of course, being a bride,' with a little affected giggle, 'I ought, I suppose, to have waited for you to have called upon me first, but between you and me, dearest, I felt that there could be no such formalities, and I was so very anxious to see you;' and she took hold of Juliet's hands and made as if she would have kissed her.

Juliet had half risen from her chair, and looked and listened to her stepmother in positive amazement.

It passed through her mind to wonder at the various phases of human nature which were constantly presenting themselves to her. What could this woman be made of to be smiling and fawning upon her, and calling her by loving names, as if the memory of their last interview were wholly wiped out of her mind?

Could she be neither a sincere friend nor even an honest enemy? The straightforwardness of her own nature revolted against the duplicity of the other.

She drew back a little coldly from the proffered embrace.

'I am surprised, I confess,' she said, with hesitation; 'I did not think—I did not imagine that after our last interview—'

'Ah, my dear, but I am not one that can bear malice,' exclaimed her visitor with easy self-possession, sinking down into the cushiony depths of an easy-chair. 'You know I was always warm-hearted; my feelings always carry me away; my sensibility, as I often say, is a snare to me, a positive snare; often, where prudence would keep me back, my heart, Juliet, carries me forward with a glow of enthusiasm. I positively *cannot* keep up a little quarrel with anyone I love—to forgive and forget is ever my motto.'

'There are some offences so deep, Mrs. Lamplough,' answered Juliet, sternly, 'that it must be a matter of years to forgive them, and to forget them is perhaps impossible.'

And then Mrs. Lamplough was silent for a minute, looking keenly at her. Juliet was standing with her face turned slightly away from her, and her eyes bent down upon the pages of a book upon the table with which her slender fingers were trifling.

Through Mrs. Lamplough's mind there passed a rapid deliberation as to what was the best course for her to pursue. Here was a woman with whom it behoved her at all risks to keep on good terms; her own position in London society depended in a great measure upon her stepdaughter. She was bent upon entering into fashionable society, and Juliet's house was the threshold and stepping-stone by which alone she knew how to attain that coveted paradise. Time enough to cast her off and to quarrel with her by and by when she had made good her own footing within the charmed circle; but for the present, for the next year probably, Juliet's goodwill and Juliet's invitations and introductions were an absolute necessity to her existence.

She had hoped to have established herself upon her old footing with her stepdaughter by a few affectionate words and caresses; it would have been much pleasanter and much easier to have ignored the stormy words that had passed between them, and to have avoided all reference to disagreeable subjects. But as Juliet did not seem disposed to let things slide into such easy grooves, there were other means at her disposal which she must perforce employ.

'Why are you so vindictive to me, Juliet?' she said, looking fixedly at her stepdaughter. 'I really cannot see what you are to gain by making an enemy of me.'

'An enemy!' repeated Juliet, turning round upon her with a heightened colour, 'I would far rather have an open enemy than a false friend.'

'Fie, fie, Juliet!' putting up both her hands in front of her

face; 'what ugly words to apply to me! My dear, how can you think I should wish to be anything but most fond of you? It is true that circumstances have perhaps given me more knowledge of the details of your life—'

'Use your knowledge,' broke in Juliet passionately, 'do your worst; I defy you to harm me.'

'Well, I *might* do you a great deal of harm, Juliet,' answered Mrs. Lamplough, with a glitter in her blue eyes that was almost a threat. 'I might, of course, take away your character—it does not take much to do *that* for a fellow woman nowadays, if one has the inclination; but, my dear, why should you imagine that I wish to do so? Depend upon it, Juliet, your happiest and best plan is to give me a kiss and let bygones be bygones, and we will say no more about it. Of course, you believe that I did you a very unkind turn in stopping that letter—well, I am sorry for it; but there is no real harm done; you are married, and rich, and sought after, and your husband does not bother you. Why should he or anyone else ever know that the Colonel Fleming who comes to your house now is an old lover for whom you are hankering? Will such knowledge improve your position or your happiness?'

Juliet did not answer, bitterly feeling the truth of her words, and forced to acknowledge that it would be indeed best for her to be friends with this woman, who held her secret so cruelly in her power; and yet an outraged turmoil of pride and anger kept her silent.

Mrs. Lamplough looked at her for a few minutes, watching the effect of her words, and then she said, with a little laugh:—

'If you are so obstinately silent, I shall begin to think that I am indeed in the way this afternoon; possibly, as you are alone to-day, you are expecting a favoured visitor, or perhaps, like the lovers in the French plays, he fled at my inopportune entrance, and is hidden behind the window-curtains.'

The gnat-bite answered where the open stab had failed. Juliet turned round to her like a wounded creature.

'For heaven's sake,' she cried, 'spare me such cruel pleasantries. My life is as innocent as yours, and you know it; and if my heart is guilty, you know better than anyone how far more sinned against than sinning I am. Say nothing more about this subject to me, I entreat you; it is an insult to me to allude to it, and—perhaps you are right—let us be friends; it will be better, possibly, for us all.'

'Ah, there is my own dear girl!' cried Mrs. Lamplough, with an easy return to her usual gushing manner. 'I knew you would be sensible and let this little cloud blow over, and leave us nothing

but fair blue skies. Come, sit down beside me, and give me a kiss, dearest.'

She drew her stepdaughter down into a seat close to her, and kissed her impassive cheek with a sort of clinging rapture that almost made Juliet shudder. 'As if I ever could believe any naughty bad things of you, my dear girl! Pray don't imagine me to be such an unkind creature, I who am so fond of you. And now we will say no more about it ever again; let us talk of something else.'

With an effort Juliet roused herself to talk of ordinary topics—to ask her when she had come to town, how she liked her new home and her new life—and by degrees, as the bride's new hopes and aims and ambitions became revealed to her, Juliet began to understand what was to be her part of the contract of peace between them, and what was the price she was expected to pay in order to ensure her silence upon the one subject on which alone she was vulnerable—numberless invitations to her own house, and introductions to the houses of her friends. It would be a bore, of course, but Juliet was cheerfully prepared to do her best; and she could not help admiring the skilful cunning which had enabled her stepmother to turn everything so satisfactorily to her own ends, and to make use of her so cleverly as a stepping-stone to attain her own objects and desires.

(To be continued.)

My Peculiarity.

WE poets, when suddenly summoned away
 From the world's petty sphere to the region of rhyme,
 The importunate call ~~at~~ a moment obey,
 To indulge in the playful or grasp the sublime.
 I've indited impromptus again and again,
 While bewildered—it matters not how or by whom ;
 I can write at my club, on the boat, in a train ;—
 But I never can write with a wasp in the room.

'Tis twilight. The suburbs are tranquil and calm
 (And my own is as tranquil and calm as the rest),
 So I sit by my lattice, inhaling the balm
 That is borne on the zephyr—methinks from the west.
 I am far from the haunts and the passions of men,
 Among birds in high feather and roses in bloom ;—
 What an idyll to-night could I give to my pen !
 But I never could write with a wasp in the room.

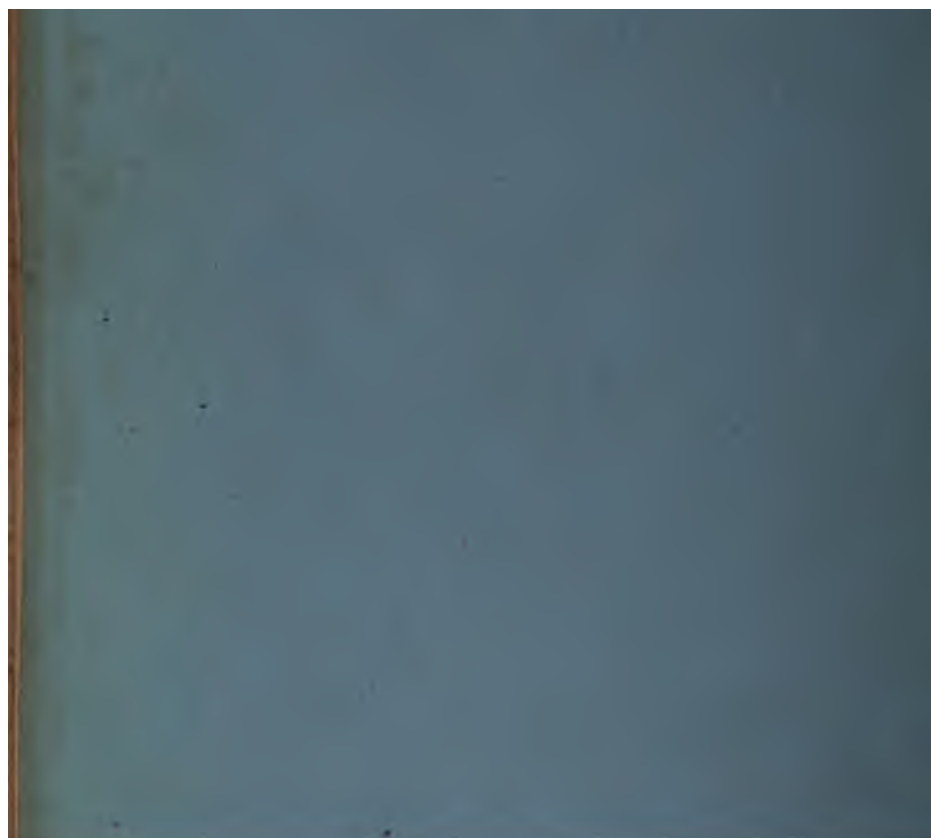
From Flora's dominion, ah ! why should he roam,
 To invade—and unbidden—Apollo's domain ?
 I opine that his object in tracking me home
 Is to drive the gay anapaests out of my brain.
 Fly away, pretty guest, fly away from the shade !
 'Tis philosophers only that bask in the gloom.
 I have money to earn, there is verse to be made ;
 And I never can write with a wasp in the room.

Not gone ? Very well, then ; 'tis war to the knife.
 I appeal to the *ultima ratio* of kings.
 I have proffered you liberty. Look to your life !
 Cotton handkerchiefs knotted are dangerous things.
 If that weapon should fail, there are others in store :
 I've a poker, a shovel, some tongs, and a broom.
 I am eager for work, as I told you before ;
 And I never can write with a wasp in the room.

'Tis finished : retributive justice is dealt.
 You may think me severe, but it's one of my ways ;
 For, when once an antipathy comes to be felt,
 It is felt evermore to the end of our days.
 When my own shall be ended—it matters not how—
 They may carve on the marble that graces my tomb :
 ' He was not a bad poet, as poets go now ;
 But he never could write with a wasp in the room ! '

HENRY S. LEIGH.





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